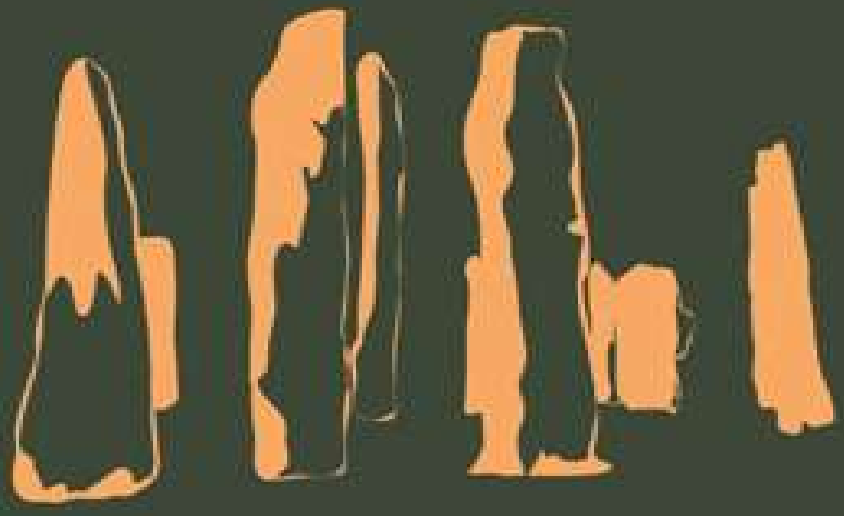
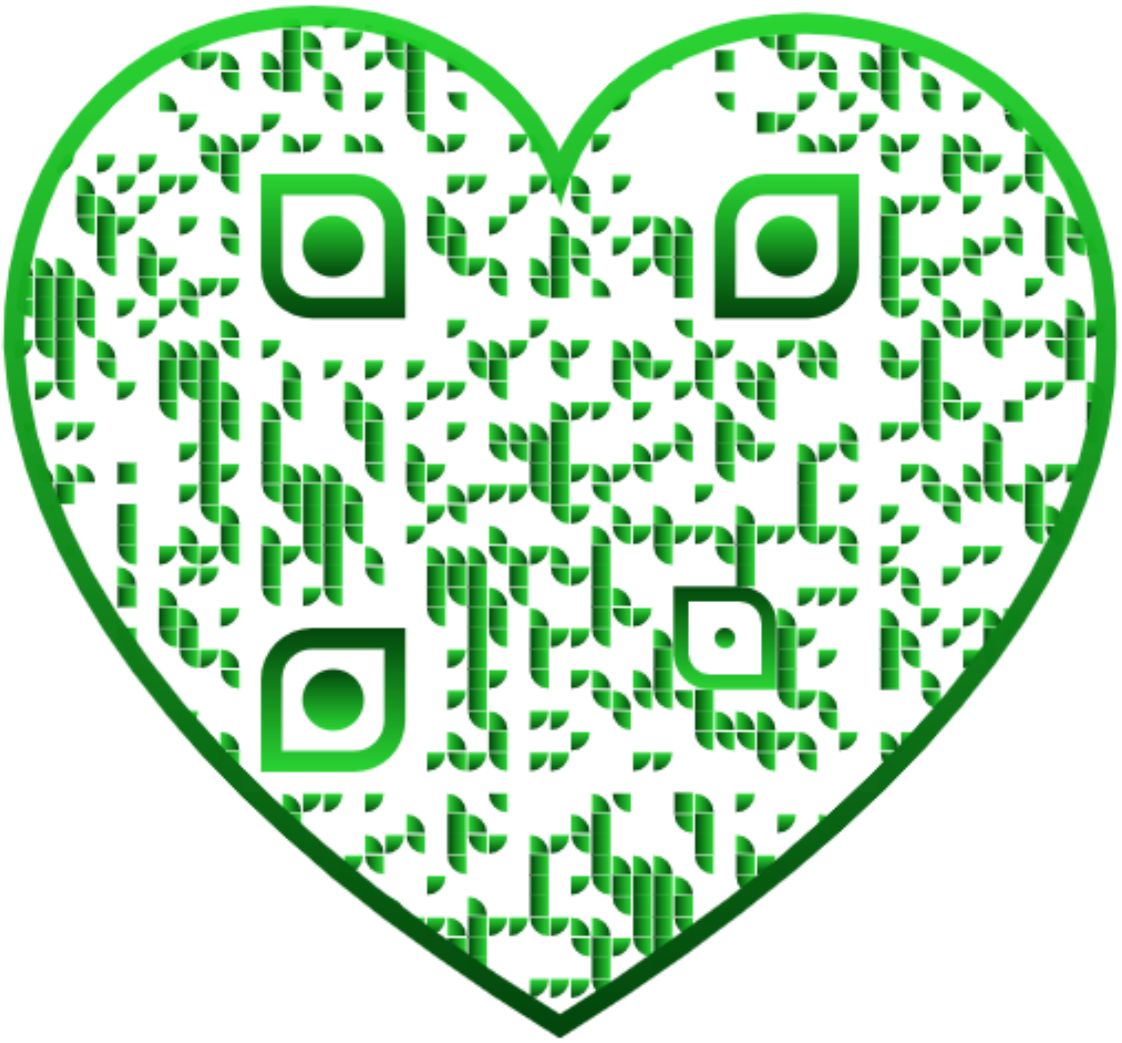
A Field Guide to Megalithic and Other Prehistoric Sites

The Old Stones OF SCOTLAND



The Megalithic Portal

Edited by Andy Burnham



THE OLD STONES OF SCOTLAND

A Field Guide to Megalithic and Other Prehistoric Sites

The Megalithic Portal

Edited by Andy Burnham

THE OLD STONES OF SCOTLAND

Where to start with Scotland? From what amounts to a stone circle showroom at Machrie Moor on Arran in the southwest, up to Orkney in the far north where some of Britain's most spectacular prehistoric remains can be found, there are amazing sites of all types up and down the country. Some settings are unexpected – Balfarg, one of Scotland's largest henge monuments – is situated in the centre of a 1980s housing estate in Fife, while the stone circle of Craighead Badentoy in Aberdeenshire is surrounded by huge industrial containers. If you don't have long, then the Isle of Arran or Kilmartin Valley (Argyll) are good choices, as both are reachable in a day from Glasgow and contain a wealth of prehistoric monuments. If you have longer, then consider visiting Orkney or Western Isles such as Lewis and Harris for world-famous sites as well as hundreds of lesser-known treasures.

The Old Stones of Scotland is part of a series covering the megalithic and other prehistoric sites of Britain and Ireland. The series is published together as *The Old Stones: A Field Guide to the Megalithic Sites of Britain and Ireland*, available as a book and an ebook.

Contents

Editor's Introduction

Scotland

Stone Circles
John Barnatt

Dowsing at Cairn Holy
Angie Lake

Hidden Evidence: The Lochbrow Project
Kirsty Millican

Top 10 Urban Prehistory Sites
Kenneth Brophy

The Lives of Stones
Anne Tate

Investigating the Forteviot Ceremonial Landscape
Andy Burnham

Archaeoastronomy in Western Scotland
Gail Higginbottom

Carved Stone Balls
Julie Kearney

Recumbent Stone Circles
Adam Welfare

Skyscape Archaeology at Tomnaverie
Liz Henty

What is the Lunar Standstill?

Vicky Tuckman

The Song of the Low Moon
Grahame Gardner

Excavations at the Ness of Brodgar
Andy Burnham

An Early Neolithic House at Cata Sand
Vicki Cummings

Editor’s Introduction

Andy Burnham, founder and Editor of the Megalithic Portal

This is the first book written by and for prehistoric site enthusiasts. It is a truly collaborative project – just like the Megalithic Portal website itself – that brings together photographs, site information, theories and expertise from the thousands of people that use and post on the site. Focusing on sites from the Neolithic and Bronze Age, this is the most comprehensive guide ever created to the best ancient places to visit in Britain and Ireland, offering an up-to-date look at the archaeology, including many extraordinary discoveries and theories that have been featured on the pages of the Megalithic Portal over the years, as well as a taster of the more mysterious side of things.

Just as the Portal is a collaborative effort, so no one person’s ideas or theories are given more weight in this book. Instead, we celebrate the advances in archaeological practice, theory, dating and analysis that have taken place in the last 25 years. Geophysics, excavation and dating techniques have progressed in this time. There has also been an increased recognition of the importance of accepting non-academic viewpoints, whether from schoolchildren, community volunteers or some of the more leftfield theorists. Alternative ways of exploring and appreciating sites and wider landscapes – previously the realm of a radical fringe – have filtered into the mainstream. Landscape archaeology has in many cases accepted – if not wholeheartedly embraced – phenomenology and multi-sensory approaches, which anyone can try with an open mind and a bit of practice. Advances in technology offer new ways of experiencing sites, for example through augmented reality that merges GIS (geographical information system) landscape models with 3D reconstructions of structures.

Recently, I've been rereading early 1990s editions of *3rd Stone* magazine, styled “for the new antiquarian”, the realm of ley hunters and earth mysteries researchers. Have we moved on in 25 years? Ideas of alignments between sites, of stone shapes matching the landscape, of the importance of colour, sound and experiencing sites in different frames of mind have filtered through to theoretical archaeology, to be discussed openly in papers and at conferences – even if they don’t always get past the gatekeepers of archaeology books and magazines for consumption by the “general public”.

About the Megalithic Portal

The Megalithic Portal is completely independent, with no outside funding save for what we can raise with a bit of advertising on the site, and now through royalties from this book, all of which are being ploughed back into the dayto-day running and further development of the website and our other projects. For the last 10 years we have run as a membership society, similar to any other archaeology society, except with an international reach and outlook. We hold meetings by phone conference and our society members hail from all over Europe, as well as North America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and beyond.

Ardlair recumbent stone circle Cows represent one of the biggest challenges faced by the megalith enthusiast!

One of the inspirations for the Megalithic Portal was my own experience, in the 1980s and early 1990s, of reading about sites in books or magazine articles with no accurate location details. Even now, articles and papers often don't give proper location information. I started compiling links to sites on the early web in

1996. People began to offer their own information and photos, and a collaborative project was born. The Megalithic Portal was formed in 2001 to continue this process. Much of the site’s content has been created by a group of several hundred dedicated volunteers, but there is a huge range in involvement, from those sending in a couple of photos or sites, to people who have contributed more than 10,000 of these.

About this Book

This book is not just made up of my own favourite sites but has been compiled in a collaborative way, just like the Megalithic Portal itself. Contributions in the form of articles, which appear throughout the book, have come in from scores of writers, from archaeologists to alternative theorists to keen site visitors. Many of Britain and Ireland's top prehistorians have kindly contributed pieces about their research.

I have included opinions from a wide range of people who have original ways to approach ancient sites. While I don't personally go along with all of the ideas proposed, I feel it's important to at least give them an airing and let you, the reader, make up your own mind. Sometimes thinking about a problem in a new and creative way can lead to unexpected breakthroughs and we should not be closed minded to different ways of experiencing ancient sites.

The Megalithic Portal photo gallery contains images from several thousand different contributors. Each photo has a voting button allowing visitors to "like" a specific site. This anonymous voting data provided the basis of a longlist for sites to include in the book, from which a team of Megalithic Portal members selected the final list of sites to include for each region. With the voting data in mind, as well as their local knowledge, the team identified the very "best" sites and gave these a star rating. The voting data also provided the basis for most of the Top 10 and 15 lists you will see throughout the book. After all this, we are confident this is the most comprehensive and democratically selected list of prehistoric sites that has ever been put in a book like this, grouped into regions for convenient visiting and browsing.

Site descriptions have been compiled from the available sources, including excavation reports and blogs from all over the various countries and regions. I must here send thanks to the various online national site databases: Canmore (Historic Environment Scotland), PastScape (Historic England), Coflein (Wales), the National Monuments Service Historic Environment Viewer (Republic of Ireland), the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record, and the Manx Museum for their information and help, which has been invaluable. Some of the online entries are quite complex and hard to interpret so I hope our pithy summaries are helpful. Again, these entries have been checked and amended by Megalithic Portal members from all over the UK and Ireland. The vast majority of pictures in the book have been sent in by Megalithic Portal contributors. People have been so generous with their photos, taking time to look through their personal archives. Images have come from members as far afield

as New Zealand and Japan. It has been tricky to keep track of exactly how many sites we've included – in the spirit of the "countless stones" of folklore, we kept getting different totals. However, I can confidently say we feature over 1,000 sites, with more than 600 with a full profile, plus some 400 "Nearby" listings, covering five countries and not forgetting the Isle of Man!

Each site listing includes an eight-figure Ordnance Survey map reference, and gives the OS paper map sheet the site is found on. For the UK the map sheets are: E – Explorer (orange); OL – Outdoor Leisure (yellow); L – Landranger (pink); and D for the Discoverer maps of Northern Ireland. In the Republic of Ireland, the D is for Discovery Map, whose numbering is shared with the North. For Sat Nav and GPS users we also give latitude and longitude locations for sites.

We have not given full directions to each site as we could fill up a book just with these! The Megalithic Portal (**www.megalithic.co.uk**) has a page for each of the entries in this book (directly linked from the ebooks), where you will find more information. You can search by site name or by map reference using the box at top left of any Megalithic Portal page. We also have a great app that allows you to search for sites by name or on a map. Each page links to various online map services and satellite images. Look on the web pages for the Nearby Sites list to find the more obscure sites that we couldn't fit in. You will also find visitor comments and source references at the bottom of each site page. If you know any sources of information we don't currently list or have any comments about sites featured in this book or on the website, please do submit them.

The Megalithic Portal includes a wide range of ancient sites, so I should mention some that we haven't had space to cover in this book: Iron Age features, such as hill forts, brochs and souterrains; Palaeolithic and Mesolithic find spots and camps; early Christian crosses and other early medieval sites; holy wells and sacred springs; modern stone circles; natural features that may have been revered by or inspired prehistoric people.

As this is a "field guide" we have only included a very few (particularly interesting) sites where there is little or nothing to see on the ground. In fact there are many more lost sites that have been destroyed. The Raunds Area Project in Northamptonshire, for example, found more than 20 vanished mounds, barrows, avenues and causewayed enclosures in the Nene valley, near Wellingborough. We list the ones we know about on the website and welcome photos of the surrounding landscape – even if there are no prehistoric remains still to be seen. Visiting sites that are no longer there, imagining what they were like or how they were used, is true "hardcore" site visiting and for this we salute you!

For reasons of space we have had to limit ourselves to the UK, Isle of Man and Ireland. We haven't included sites on the Channel Islands, as these have more in common with the sites of France, and that's something for another day. We did originally look at including parts of continental Europe but felt it would be impossible to do justice to the many thousands of megalithic sites in countries such as Germany, Denmark, France, Spain and Portugal, and in eastern Europe. There are also many ancient sites in the USA and the rest of the Americas. Not forgetting India, China and … why am I trying to list them all? The Portal features sites from 136 countries – including Liechtenstein, which I recently had to add so one of our contributors could post an entry.

SAFETY

Do not rely purely on modern technology for navigation; always carry a backup map and compass. Know your limits and take care around ancient monuments, which can be dangerous places with unseen holes, cliffs and other pitfalls. Take a torch with you and suitable rations if trekking long distances. Wear appropriate footwear and clothing.

In this ebook we have embedded a link in the title of each megalithic site. These lead directly to the relevant pages on the Megalithic Portal web resource, so if you have an Internet connection you can click on these for more information and photos of each site.

How to Get Involved

We have tried to ensure the information in this book is as accurate as possible, but if you find any errors please do let us know so that we can update future editions. We would also love to hear from you on the website. At the Megalithic Portal we aim to be a sounding board for discussion, as well as a repository for accurate and up-to-date information on specific sites and monuments – and all of this requires constant input from our contributors. We strive to be fair to everyone and create an atmosphere where views can be challenged and disagreed with constructively and respectfully. We have, for example, a Sacred Sites and Megalithic Mysteries forum where we encourage discussion of all manner of experiences and theories relating to ancient sites. Just be respectful to others, even if you disagree with their ideas, and you'll be welcome.

Also on the site is a visit log feature, where you can keep a record of all the ancient sites you have visited, along with your comments and personal ratings as you go. This can be found on the right-hand side of each site entry, along with the link to submit photos of your own.

These days, electronic devices such as smartphones are available to all, and these have changed the way we interact with the outdoors, whether with augmented reality, audio guides, geocaching, Pokémon Go or simply being able to access information while on the move. Academic papers are increasingly put online and even traditional closed journals are getting in on the the act, offering free trial periods or codes to get through their paywalls. Many archaeology site databases are now available online. But better linking of information sources is still badly needed and that's something that we try to do at the Megalithic Portal. Official site databases could be better at curating links, and projects should plan for the long-term availability of their data. I have lost count of the number of projects that forget to renew their web addresses, while entire online archives disappear as researchers lose funding, move on or just go for a redesign. Keeping knowledge free and available amounts to the "archaeology of the internet". But to get off my soapbox, it's amazing that this unprecedented amount of information is available to everyone – it's there to be made use of. And don't forget traditional libraries, archives and just getting out there to do your own research.

CODE OF CONDUCT

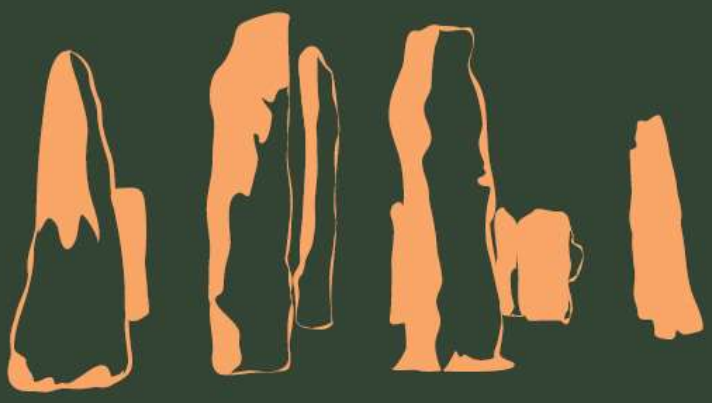
Much damage is done accidentally by people who mean no harm. Think twice, and don't do anything which would cause degradation to the monument. For

more details on visiting sites, see the Megalithic Portal Charter, linked at the bottom of any page on the website.

- Check access. Exclusions to the “right to roam” include private gardens and cultivated farmland (unless on footpaths or field margins).
- Get permission to visit sites on private land. This is usually granted if asked for politely – many landowners appreciate their sites as much as we do, but repeated unauthorized visits could lead to access being denied to all.
- Don’t climb on the stones or on rock art. o Don’t try to remove lichen or dig near an ancient site.
- Don’t use wax candles or nightlights inside tombs. You can get very effective LED candles that are much cleaner and safer.
- Don’t light fires close to sites. o Do not move, mark or alter the site in any way, even temporarily.
- Don’t hide caches immediately in or around sites or use metal detectors.
- Any artefacts found should be reported to the local museum or via the Portable Antiquities Scheme (finds.org.uk).
- Do not fly drones around ancient sites without permission – for aerial photography try a kite or long pole instead.
- All in all, please be respectful, keep dogs under control and don’t “hog” the monument for your own rituals/purposes if there are others around.

This book is testament to the passion for prehistoric sites held by so many. Everyone can play a part in adding to our knowledge of ancient sites, and anyone can put time into researching, finding, photographing, monitoring and tidying them. I can only imagine what our stone-raising ancestors would have made of people all over the world communicating and rather obsessing over their efforts with seemingly magical writing devices, 5,000 years into the future! It’s a strange but humbling thought.

For a free extra year’s membership of the Megalithic Portal Society (two years for the price of one), go to: **www.megalithic.co.uk/double**



SCOTLAND

Top 15 Stone Circles & Rows in Scotland 1. Callanish 1 (Lewis) **p.338**

2. **Ring of Brodgar (Orkney)** p.344

3. **Stones of Stenness (Orkney)** p.345

4. **Easter Aquhorthies (Aberdeenshire)** p.320

5. **Tyrebagger (Aberdeenshire)** p.320

6. **Machrie Moor (Arran)** p.260

7. **Ballymeanoch (Argyll)** p.297

8. **Torhousekie (Dumfries and Galloway)** p.266

9. **Balnuaran of Clava (Highland)** p.325

10. **Callanish 3 (Lewis)** p.340

11. **Tomnaverie (Aberdeenshire)** p.317

12. **Loch Buie (Mull)** p.306

13. **Loanhead of Daviot (Aberdeenshire)** p.322

14. **Midmar Kirk (Aberdeenshire)** p.316

15. **Sunhoney (Aberdeenshire)** p.316

Southwest Scotland Isle of Arran

AUCHENCAR Alt Name: **Druid**

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Blackwaterfoot** Map: **NR 8905 3633** | Sheets:1 **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.57482N** | Long: **5.34786W**

A fantastic red sandstone standing stone, furry with lichen, very narrow (about 0.2m/9in thick) and some 5m (16ft) high, tapering to a point. A second stone, broken and fallen, lies to the south, 3.5m (11ft 5in) long and 1.5m (5ft) at the base. The two may have formed part of a setting. Fabulous views over Machrie Bay, and Beinn Bharrain to the north. Aubrey Burl suspected Machrie Moor's large red sandstone pillars may have come from here.

"In 2000BC, the star Arcturus would have appeared to skim along the top of Beinn Bharrain (virtually due north)." David Smyth

Photo © David Smyth

AUCHAGALLON

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Blackwaterfoot** Map: **NR 8928 3464** | Sheets: **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.55979N** | Long: **5.3428W**

Set in an archaeologically rich landscape, just over 2km (1¼ miles) from Machrie Moor 10, this unusual monument overlooking Machrie Bay is ringed by a 14.5 × 13m (47ft 6in × 42ft 7in) circle of 15 sandstone blocks that range from 0.5m (1½ft) to 2.3m (7½ft) in height. In 1910 an elderly local, one Mr Sim, was quoted as stating that when he was young, the centre of the circle was flat and free of stones, suggesting the cairn might have been augmented by modern field clearance.

Nearby | At NR 8945 3363, 1 km (0.6 miles) SSE of Auchagallon, is the 1.5m (5ft) **Machriewaterfoot** standing stone. At NR 9084 3511, 1.6km (1 mile) ENE of Auchagallon, is the **Machrie Burn** stone circle, a four-poster of granite pillars each around 0.6m (2ft) high.

Photo © ukvegan

Stone Circles

John Barnatt, recently retired as Survey Archaeologist for the Peak District (National Park)

Some stone circles are impressive communal monuments where many people had a hand in their construction. Others are small affairs built by local farming groups, perhaps comprising only a few extended families. They were built for over 1,000 years, mostly in the later Neolithic and earlier Bronze Age, from around 2500 to 1500BC. The construction phases of individual circles are notoriously hard to date, even after excavation. Material is sometimes recovered from use that spanned hundreds of years, or from after the monument had been transformed into something very different from what was originally intended.

The stone circles we see today are only vestiges of what was once there, some no doubt destroyed before antiquarians were recording ancient sites. We know from archaeological excavations that some stone rings were preceded by others built in timber. In other cases timber rings were never replaced in stone – these were probably common but are often now hard to find. Some sites have central cairns or ring cairns that were fundamental to the design from the outset, while elsewhere small cairns were added later as simple funerary structures. Commonly, circles are only one element within monument complexes with a variety of stone, timber and earthen structures.

In Wessex and southwest England there are large, regularly built circles with carefully spaced stones. These stand in contrast to other rings with irregularly spaced stones that are built to appear roughly circular. Some regions have circles with distinctive architecture, such as the recumbent stone circles of Aberdeenshire with their “altar stones” flanked by tall pillars, and the Clava cairns further north, which feature a stone circle surrounding a chambered cairn or ring cairn. Another particular form is the four-posters of eastern Scotland, with four stones set in a circle or square. On Dartmoor, the distinctive rings at the business end of stone rows stand out from the larger open circles on the moor.

Stone circles were primarily built for the living as gathering places, probably for ceremonies related to the seasons or to the cycle of life, or for communing with the spirits of place. However, it is unlikely that each

had one unchanging purpose through time.

MACHRIE MOOR

Megalithic Complex | Nearest Village: **Blackwaterfoot**
Map: **NR 9006 3265** | Sheets: **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.54225N** | Long: **5.32907W**

Machrie Moor is a remarkable place. As well as beautiful views across to Kintyre from some sites, and a wonderful setting amid Arran's hills for the rest, it has such a variety of monuments it's almost like a showroom for stone circles. In addition to the six circles (which had been preceded by timber circles in the same locations) and four chambered cairns (some uncertain), there are field systems, round cairns and hut circles. The larger ancient landscape includes at least a further five stone circles, three stones and one chambered cairn within 5km (3 miles). For example: at NR 9031 3106, 1.6km (1 mile) SSE of Machrie Moor 10, is Tormore 1 chambered cairn; at NR 9244 3225, 2.4km (1½ miles) east of Machrie Moor 10, is Shiskine stone circle; at NR 908 351, 2.6km (just over (1½ miles) NNE of Machrie Moor 10, is Machrie Burn stone circle.

MACHRIE MOOR 10

At NR 9006 3265, this is the first site you reach as you start to traverse the moor. This complex ring cairn has been quite badly robbed for stone and damaged by a track, but is still impressive. Excavation in 1978–9 revealed that it was originally enclosed by a circle of sandstone slabs, of which five remain. Surrounding the circle is a stony bank some 3m (10ft) wide and 0.7m (2ft 3in) high.

MOSS FARM STONE

A fine standing stone at NR 9064 3254, to the left of the main track, the Moss Farm or Machrie Stone is heavily grooved and weathered. It stands close to a modern memorial boulder.

TORMORE 2

As you progress further along the path to the main part of the moor, this chambered cairn is off to the right, at NR 9058 3237. It's badly damaged but the chamber is still visible, measuring around 3 × 0.9m (10 × 3ft) with a fine pair of portal stones to the northeast.

MACHRIE MOOR 5

At NR 9088 3235, overlooking the rest of the moor, is a wonderful pair of concentric circles, made of chunky granite boulders around 0.9m (3ft) to 1.2m (4ft) high. Fingal's Cauldron Seat (Suidhe Coire Fhionn) is the only named monument in the Machrie Moor complex. Look out for the holed stone where, it is said, the giant Fingal tethered his dog, Bran, while he cooked his tea in an enormous cauldron balanced on the circle stones. The inner circle of eight stones is 12m (39ft) in diameter, while the outer circle of 15 stones (including the holed one) is 18m (59ft) across. In 1873 John McArthur recorded the superstition that the holed stone "was believed to contain a fairy or brownie, who could only be propitiated by the pouring of milk through the hole bored in the side of the stone."

MACHRIE MOOR 3

Once there were nine stones in this circle at NR 9101 3245, but only one 4.3m (14ft) giant remains. The broken stumps of several others can be seen, their buried tops and other stones now hidden from view beneath the soil.

MACHRIE MOOR 4

This is a four-poster stone circle at NR 9100 3236, with granite boulders about 0.9m (3ft) high. Aubrey Burl raised the possibility of a fifth stone once existing at the northwest, which would have made this a five-stone circle of the Irish type.

MACHRIE MOOR 2

At NR 9114 3242 is the most famous of the Machrie Moor circles. Originally there were probably seven or eight tall stones in the 13.7m (45ft) circle, but only three remain intact, great pillars of weathered red sandstone, rising from 3.7m (12ft) to 4.9m (16ft) tall. The stumps of several others can also be seen, as well as two millstones, of a different type of rock, to the southeast, which may have been made from a fallen upright.

Photo © UKVegan

MACHRIE MOOR 1

This 11-stone circle, at NR 9120 3240, has alternating sandstone and granite boulders, five of the former and six of the latter. Angela Haggerty found the post-holes of two pre-existing concentric timber circles here, set around a horseshoe of five post-holes, the opening facing northwest. Just outside this opening, post-holes were found of a further, small timber circle that may predate the main timber circles. A further, solitary post-hole was found to the north of the stone circle, between it and Machrie Moor 6.

MACHRIE MOOR 11

This circle, at NR 9122 3242, was more or less completely concealed beneath the peat, before being located by probing and uncovered by Aubrey Burl in 1978–9 (he named it Machrie Moor 11). It’s the most easterly circle on the moor, with 10 small stones, all but one of sandstone, in a 13.5 × 12.5m (44 × 41ft) ring. The tallest stone reaches 1.2m (4ft). Between each stone is a pit or post-hole; it is not clear if the timber circle was put up before the stones or if they were contemporaneous.

Photo © Andy Burnham

MAP

TORRYLIN

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Lagg**
Map: **NR 9552 2107** | Sheets: **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.44071N** | Long: **5.23420W**

This was probably once a Clyde cairn but stone robbing and the addition of field clearance stones have greatly obscured the original shape of the mound – it's not even possible to say whether there was a forecourt or façade. What can be seen today is a grassy mound with some slabs of the chamber protruding. The side slabs overlap each other where they meet the transverse slabs, a design that was probably intended to help support the roof. An excavation in 1900 found a flint knife, part of a bowl and some human remains here.

Photo © Drew Parsons

"A nice site located a short walk from the village of Lagg, along a well-marked footpath leading toward the coast." Drew Parsons

LARGYBEG POINT Alt Name: The Sailor's Grave

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Whiting Bay**
Map: **NS 0536 2334** | Sheets: **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.46505N** | Long: **5.080340W**

Variously described as a stone circle and a stone setting, the two stones on Largybeg Point stand 3m (10ft) apart, apparently aligned with Holy Island in Whiting Bay. One is 1m (3ft 3in) high, the second is about 1.3m (4ft 3in). There's also the possible stump of a third stone, just 0.1m (4in) high, which may be natural. Aubrey Burl suggests these stones may be the remains of a four-poster. A pile of slabs close to the uprights may be the remains of a cist.

Photo © Andy Burnham

GIANTS' GRAVES

Chambered Cairns | Nearest Village: **Whiting Bay**
Map: **NS 0430 2467** | Sheets: **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.4766N** | Long: **5.09806W**

Visiting now it's hard to imagine what this site looked like before the plantation was harvested, and photographs from the early 21st century seem to show somewhere else entirely. The climb up is reasonably hard going but it's worth it for the sweeping views across to Holy Island, and if you go back via the waterfall it makes an excellent circular walk. Both tombs are long cairns of the Clyde cairn type, and quite badly damaged, with the northern, larger tomb in better condition – it's easier to see the horned forecourt leading to the chamber. The fallen capstone features graffiti from the 19th century. Interestingly, the cairns are not aligned in the same direction – the northern tomb has a north–south axis and the southern cairn is at right angles to it. Excavations took place in 1902, when arrowheads, pottery sherds and burnt bone were found, and in 1960. It's believed in some cases the bodies were excarnated (left out to be de-fleshed) before burial.

MONAMORE Alt Name: **Meallach's Grave**

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Lamlash**
Map: **NS 0175 2889** | Sheets: **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.51341N** | Long: **5.14139W**

It's a pleasant climb up through the woods to get to this Clyde cairn, high up on the hill with great views of Goat Fell. The tomb has been severely robbed, and the remaining cairn is covered with long grass and bracken. The portal stones are quite impressive, and you can step down into the chamber, which has three compartments and overlapping side panels. The capstones are missing. Excavations in 1961 revealed an impressive forecourt façade, about 8m (26ft) across, consisting of eight uprights set in a shallow curve linked by dry-stone walling. One radiocarbon measurement dated a sample of charcoal fragments to 3160BC. AOC Archaeology have scanned and modelled these cairns; see the Megalithic Portal web page.

LAMLASH Alt Name: **Blairmore Glen**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Lamlash**
Map: **NS 0188 3342** | Sheets: **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.55410N** | Long: **5.14258W**

You can just about see some of the stones of this four-stone circle from the road, once you know where to look. To access them involves a bit of a fight through the bracken and gorse. The four rounded boulders are large but low, reaching from 0.5m to 1.2m (1ft 8in to 4ft). A central rock-cut cist was opened by James Bryce in 1861 and contained evidence of cremated remains.

GLEN SHIEL

Stone Row | Nearest Town: **Brodick**
Map: **NS 0063 3744** | Sheets: **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.58966N** | Long: **5.16529W**

You can take a rather circuitous walk to find these red sandstone uprights, or pass them on the (one-way) road out from Brodick Castle. The road divides them, with two (3.6m/11ft 9in and 2.3m/7ft 6in tall) in one field and the other (2.5m/8ft 2in tall) across the road. A cist containing a food vessel was found aligned with the stones in 1980.

Nearby | At NS 0100 3661, 970m (over ½ mile) southeast of Glen Shiel, is the **Stronach** standing stone, right by the side of the road out of Brodick.

At NS 0030 3636, 1.2km (¾ mile) SSW of Glen Shiel, is **Stronach Ridge**, where some beautiful rock art is hidden.

Photo © Sandy Gerrard

NORTH SANNOX FARM

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Sannox**
Map: **NS 0111 4676** | Sheets: **E361 L69** | Lat: **55.67347N** | Long: **5.16442W**

For many years this chambered cairn crouched damply in the forest, green and mossy. The harvesting of the plantation has dramatically changed the setting: now a post-apocalyptic vista of tree stumps has exposed the monument to the sun once more, and revealed the view across to the sea. The badly damaged cairn is around 17 × 14m (56ft × 46ft), having been ploughed over at one end. One chamber is clearly visible. There is a semi-circular platform to the southeast.

Photo © Andy Burnham

Nearby | At NS 0142 4659, 352m (1,155ft) ESE of North Sannox Farm, is a damaged large chambered cairn with one upright remaining. You'll find this one first, as it's close to the car park. The chambered cairn described above is up the

hill from this site. Go through the gate in the fence and head to the right up what's left of a twisting, hard-to-see Forestry Commission path.

At NS 0143 4578, in Mid Sannox village and visible from the road, is **Mid Sannox** standing stone, 2.7m (8ft 10in) tall. An 18]63 record tells that a double circle of tall standing stones may have existed here until 1836. Just 290m (945ft) ESE of here is another tall stone, **Sannox Bay**, in a private garden.

Dumfries and Galloway

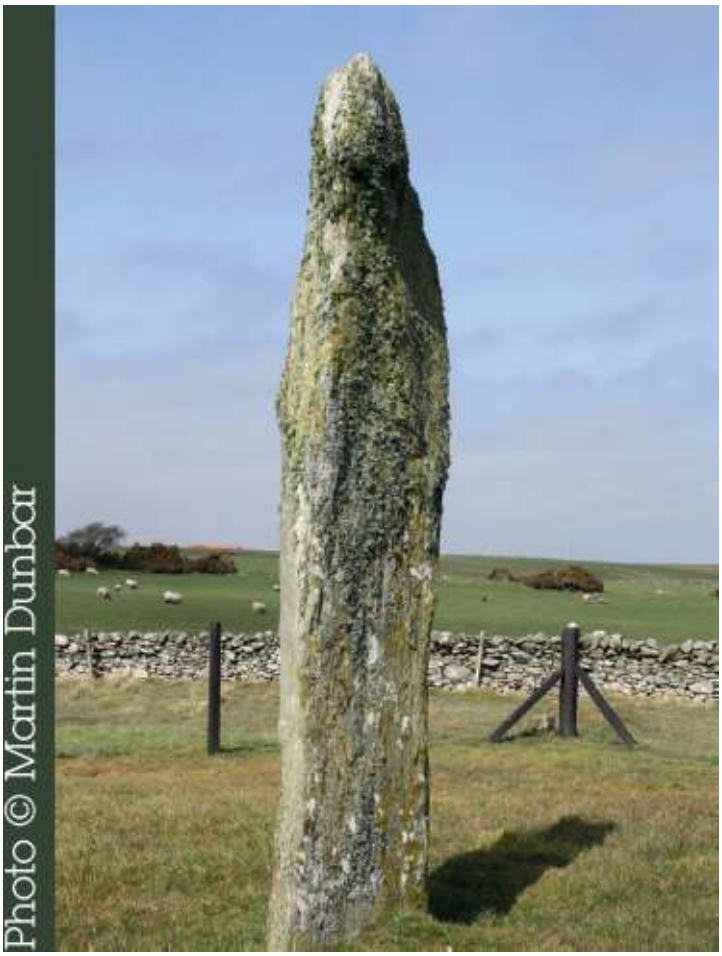
MAP

DRUMTRODDAN

Stone Row | Nearest Village: **Port William**
Map: **NX 3645 4430** | Sheets: **E311 L83** | Lat: **54.76691N** | Long: **4.54375W**

Originally recorded in the 19th century as a row of four stones, three stones remain today and only one of these is still standing. That one is impressive, however, at over 3m (10ft) tall; the two fallen stones are over 3m (10ft) and 2.7m (9ft) long. Commanding views from here over Dumfries and Galloway, extending across the Machars to the west and as far as the Galloway Hills to the northeast.

Nearby | Around NX 3626 4474, 478m (1,568ft) northwest of the row, are the fine Drumtroddan cup-and-ring carvings. Protected by fencing, these outcrops have at least 84 cup-and-rings. Some cups have up to six rings; others are connected by grooves. Four more groups of motifs are at NX 3628 4472. To the southwest, just inside **Drumtroddan Plantation** at NX 3619 4470, is a panel that includes a cup with four rings.



TORHOUSEKIE Alt Names: **Torhouse Stones, King Gauldus's Tomb**

Stone Circle | Nearest Town: **Wigtown**

Map: **NX 3825 5649** | Sheets: **E311 L83** | Lat: **54.87696N** | Long: **4.52252W**

In addition to the beautiful and very accessible stone circle at Torhousekie, which stands beside the B733 in gently rolling farmland, there are also standing stones, a second stone circle, a stone row and cairns, all within a 200m (656ft) radius on the northeast bank of the River Bladnoch.

STONE CIRCLE

There are 19 rounded granite boulders in the circle at NX 3825 5649, graded in height, with the tallest, at 1.4m (4ft 9in), to the ESE. In the centre of the circle are three stones set in a line, which tradition says marks the tomb of King Gauldus. This legendary ruler is thought to be Corbred II, described in George Buchanan's 16th-century *History of Scotland* as the king who fought against the Roman invaders.

STANDING STONES

At NX 3820 5644, 76m (249ft) WSW of the Torhousekie stone circle, are the **Torhousekie West** standing stones with field-clearance rocks (uncertain) between them. Both appear to face the stone circle.

Nearby | Close to the circle and visible from it, on the other side of the road at NX 3838 5651, is the little three-stone row known as **Torhousekie East** or Torhouse East. As it is set on a slightly curving line, it has been suggested these stones may be the remains of a circle. Curiously, when the central stone fell and was re-erected in 1995, archaeological investigation found a possible post-hole, indicating that there may have originally been a timber setting here. At NX 3843 5610, south of the B733 and just off the approach road to Cunninghame Farm, is a standing stone. It's similar in size and shape to the stones of the circle. Cattle are usually kept in this field, which can make it very muddy; the stone can be viewed from the road. To complete this ancient landscape, there are also a number of cairns centred around NX 3817 5665, all just north of the B733 and now very ruined.

MAP

MID GLENIRON

Chambered Cairns | Nearest Village: **Glenluce**
Map: **NX 1867 6100** | Sheets: **E310 L82** | Lat: **54.91069N** | Long: **4.83023W**

MID GLENIRON 1

This chambered long (Clyde-type) cairn was constructed in multiple phases. The first, early Neolithic, phase saw the building of a small, oval cairn with a chamber opening from the north. A second cairn was then added in front of the first. A third phase saw the construction of a façade of upright stones; a third chamber was built laterally between the two earlier cairns with its entrance in the west, giving the impression of a long, straight-sided mound with a concave north-facing entrance. In the Bronze Age, nine cremations in funerary urns were placed in the southeastern side of the cairn.

MID GLENIRON 2

At NX 1877 6093, 122m (400ft) ESE of Mid Gleniron 1, is a second multiphase, chambered long cairn: Mid Gleniron 2. Once a free-standing cairn with a small chamber opening towards the east, it was later incorporated into a long cairn with a shallow forecourt at the SSW end. In its final form it measured 14.3m (47ft) in length and up to 12m (39ft) across, but now survives only as a low mound with the remains of a six-stone façade. Neolithic pottery and tools found during the excavation of both cairns can be seen in Dumfries Museum. Another three cairns can be found within a radius of 100m, at NX 1876 6092, NX 1885 6100 and NX 1871 6092.

Nearby | At NX 1984 6441, some 3.6km (2¼ miles) NNE from Gleniron and just off the Southern Upland Way, **Caves of Kilhern** is an example of a Bargrennan-type chambered cairn (see page 268). Although badly damaged, the four chambers are clearly visible and one retains its capstone. It's about 33.5m (110ft) long and up to 1.5m (5ft) tall, and still impressive.

LAGGANGARN

Standing Stones | Nearest Town: **Stranraer**

Map: **NX 2223 7166** | Sheets: **E310 L76** | Lat: **55.00765N** | Long: **4.78137W**

These two prehistoric standing stones are set close together on a low knoll in a forestry clearing on the long-distance, coast-to-coast Southern Upland Way. The sandstone uprights are 1.9m (6ft 2in) and 1.6m (5ft 2in) high respectively, and both stones have been Christianized with 0.6–0.9m (2–3ft) Latin crosses with incised crosslets in the angles on their western faces, in a style associated with the 7th–9th century AD. It's said there were originally 14 stones here, of which seven remained in 1873, the rest apparently reused as gateposts and lintels. A pillar 13.5m (45ft) to the east is said to mark the grave of a farmer who dared to remove some of the stones!

BARGRENNAN WHITE CAIRN Alt Name: **Glentrool**

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Glentrool**

Map: **NX 3524 7836** | Sheets: **E318 L77** | Lat: **55.07227N** | Long: **4.58199W**

This chambered round cairn has given its name to the Bargrennan cairn group (as opposed to the more common Clyde-type long cairns), found only in southwest Scotland. About a dozen fit this description, typically with multiple, small, box-like chambers with passages set within round cairns. At present undated, early Bronze Age reuse has been identified at excavated sites. Now set in forestry plantation, the White Cairn is about 13.7m (45ft) across and up to 1.4m (4ft 7in) tall. The chamber and south-facing entrance passage were left open after excavation; a firepit containing cremated bones and oak charcoal were also found. The most recent excavation (2004–5) identified a kerb of stones buried under the collapsed cairn. Check your map reference; there are other White Cairns around here!

BORELAND

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Town: **Newton Stewart**
Map: **NX 4057 6900** | Sheets: **E319 L83** | Lat: **54.98998N** | Long: **4.49342W**

In a clearing in the woods to the north of Newton Stewart, this is a good example of a Clyde-type long cairn. Robbed for road building in the 19th century – it has lost its "horns" and piles of stones prepared for road metal can still be seen next to the cairn today – Boreland is nonetheless an impressive, steep-sided mound of stones some 2m (6½ft) high and 24.5m (80ft) long. It's oriented on a southeast–northwest axis, with the façade at the southeast end. Today, it is topped by a modern marker cairn.

BAGBIE Alt Name: **Kirkmabreck**

Megalithic Complex | Nearest Village: **Carsluith**
Map: **NX 4980 5640** | Sheets: **E311 L83** | Lat: **54.87973N** | Long: **4.34272W**

At Bagbie there is a cairn, a four-poster stone circle and a standing stone, all within around 200m (656ft). The cairn, at NX 4879 5640, is 13.5m (44½ft)

across and 1.2m (3ft 11in) high. Two uprights on its eastern side, with a third edge slab to the northeast, are probably the remains of its kerb. The four-poster is at NX 4981 5638, immediately to the northeast, with three small stones still standing. Another standing stone (pictured), 1.6m (5ft 3in) tall, is at NX 4977 5620, 200m (656ft) south of the cairn.

GLENQUICKEN Alt Names: **Cambret Moor, Bill Diamond's Bridge**

Stone Circle | Nearest Town: **Creetown**
Map: **NX 5096 5821** | Sheets: **E312 L83** | Lat: **54.896327N** | Long: **4.325583W**

This picturesque stone circle, with dramatic views north toward Cairnsmore and the Minnigaff Hills, was described by Aubrey Burl as "the finest of all centre-stone circles". The 28 low, boulder-like stones are set in a 15.5m (51ft) ring around a central granite pillar, 1.6m (5ft 3in) tall. The tallest stones are in the southeast of the circle, and a gap to the southwest suggests a missing, 29th stone. The central area is cobbled, although overgrown with grass and reeds. In 1850, a second stone circle was recorded 250m (820ft) to the northwest, but no trace of this is now apparent.

MAP

CAULDSIDE BURN

Stone Circle and Cairns | Nearest Village: **Anwoth**
Map: **NX 5295 5711** | Sheets: **E312 L83** | Lat: **54.88703N** | Long: **4.29401W**

The 25m (82ft) stone circle has 11 remaining slabs; the largest is only 1.2m (4ft) so they can be hard to find. A slab lying at NX 5298 5723, some 100m (328ft) NNE of the circle, may be an outlier. Under 30m (98ft) NNW of the circle is a well-preserved cairn with a cist at its centre. At NX 5291 5722, 85m (279ft) northwest of the cairn, is a setting of two stones, one upright and the other almost buried in peat. The northernmost cairn, at NX 5290 5725, around 30m (98ft) NNW of the stone setting, is now visible as a hummocky mound, surrounded by a low, stony bank. At its centre is a cist, partially covered by a slab.

Photo © Brian Kerr

Nearby | At NX 5285 5738, 288m (945ft) NNW of the Cauldside Burn circle, is the **Penny Stone**. The impressive rock art here includes a cup-and-ring

encircled by a six-circuit spiral 0.6m (2ft) across.

CAIRN HOLY Alt Names: **Kirkdale, Caldus's Tomb**
Chambered Cairns | Nearest Village: **Carsluith**
Map: **NX 5176 5389** | Sheets: **E312 L83** | Lat: **54.85777N** | Long: **4.31089W**

Famously photogenic, Cairn Holy I and II are a dramatic pair of Clyde-type chambered cairns, set high on the hillside, with great views across Wigtown Bay on a good day.

CAIRN HOLY I

This is the first monument you come to, its curving façade, with eight spectacularly tall, tooth-like stones, approached via a cairn that measures 43 × 10m (141 × 33ft). The large grassy mound is impressive in itself, but the impact of the portals and horned façade is incredible. The tomb has two chambers, the one at the back sealed off with a large blocking stone, which may have been the original monument, with the second chamber, toweringly portal stones and curving façade added later. A number of important finds here included part of a jadeite axe (now in the Royal Museum of Scotland), as well as Neolithic pottery and a leaf-shaped arrowhead. A large slab in the inner chamber has a multiringed cup-mark.

Photo © Sam Barnes

CAIRN HOLY II

Carry on up the track about 150m (492ft) to NX 5182 5405 to see Cairn Holy II, which is less dramatic but only by comparison – at any other site you'd be blown away by the thrusting form of the largest portal stone, and the bed-like capstone now exposed by the erosion of earth covering the cairn. Similar in plan to Cairn Holy I, with a sealed, inner chamber and a second, probably additional chamber, this tomb is in a more dominant position, on a raised knoll. It's also known as Caldus's Tomb, and is another site traditionally believed to be the grave of the mythical Scottish king.

Nearby | At NX 5395 5342, about 2.2km (1¼ miles) east of Cairn Holy, is **High Auchenlarie**, thought to be the remains of a long cairn, the three large standing stones forming part of its façade. More recently it has been suggested that these are simply the remains of two field dykes. However, the arrangement of the stones in an elongated oval around the cairn indicates differently.

HIGH BANKS FARM

Rock Art | Nearest Town: **Kirkcudbright**
Map: **NX 7091 4895** | Sheets: **E312 L84** | Lat: **54.81871N** | Long: **4.01057W**

This 30m (98ft) rock sheet features unusual markings, with some ringed cups set in a mass of single cups that create an appealing “dimpled” effect. Casts of this remarkable rock as well as others nearby are exhibited in the Stewartry Museum in Kircudbright.

Nearby | At NX 6424 4714, 6.9km (4¼ miles) west of High Banks, is **Clauchandolly 1**, a fine rock art panel decorated with three cup-and-ring marks and an oval cartouche-like motif. At NX 6447 4722, 243m (979ft) ENE of Clauchandolly 1, is **Clauchandolly 8**, with three cup-and-ring motifs all in a line. There are several other panels to be explored in the same area west and southwest of the Smithy.

Photo © Drew Parsons

Dowsing at Cairn Holy

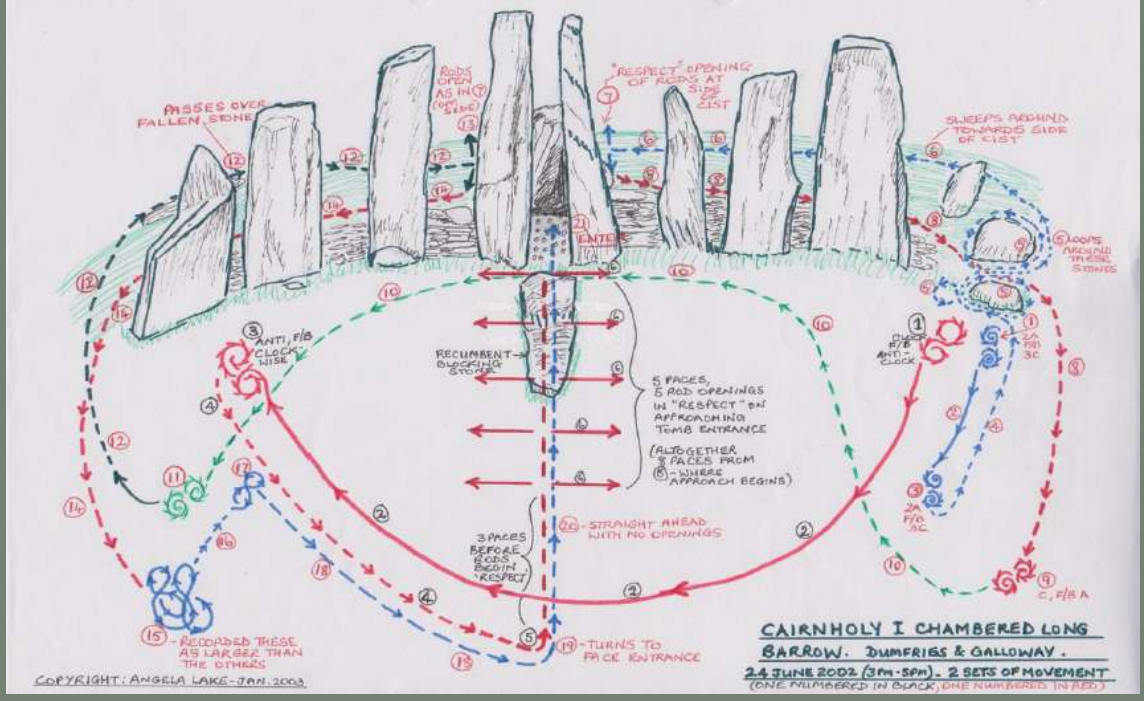
Angie Lake

I dowsed Cairn Holy 1 and 2 for ceremonial movement in June 2002. Curious as to how these monuments were originally used, in 1999 I began to ask: “Please show me how the original builders moved during their most important ceremonies at the height of this site’s importance.” I find dowsing this way can highlight unnoticed parts of a monument that could be important, and the most revered stone or landscape alignment.

My method is to relax, then focus on “being in” those ancient times, while asking to be shown, via the L-shaped copper rods, what I need to learn. Holding the rods in the “search” position (pointing forward, held comfortably at waist level, at right angles to my body), I walk across the forecourt of a tomb, asking for the beginning of a ceremony. The rods move to indicate where this starts. I make an on-site sketch while following all the rods’ movements to subsequent positions in the processional route, using different colours to illustrate overlapping routes taken and numbering them in sequence, with different colours used to signify numbers in different dowses (in the diagram, right, my first dowse is numbered in black; the second in red.)

In *Britain 3000 BC*, Rodney Castleden featured a diagram of the building sequence at a Clyde-type chambered cairn, using Cairn Holy 1 as an example: the initial construction of an uncovered cist and façade was followed by the covering of the cairn with a mound of stone. This made me realize why my two dowses there may have had separate, but both important, focal points. As the book was not published until 2003, I could not have been influenced by it. Had I discovered a longer dedication ceremony (red numbers), in which an important person was buried at the tomb’s creation? And did the shorter ceremony (black numbers) reflect a final closing ritual, after the tomb had been covered over?

I found the report on the 1949 excavations at Cairn Holy 1 and 2 in 2017. Comparing my dowsing plans with those detailed 1949 forecourt plans, I was intrigued by how close my recorded movements were to the discovered ritual deposits and hearths, also circuiting a spot opposite the tomb’s entrance, at the apex of the arc of movement around the forecourt, where archaeologists had recorded a standing stone and a hearth … as if I truly *had* followed the path of that ancient priest.


PASSES OVER FALLEN STONE
RODS OPEN AS IN (6) SIDE
"RESPECT" OPENING OF RODS AT SIDE OF CIST
SWEEPS AROUND TOWARDS SIDE OF CIST
LOOPS AROUND THESE STONES
ENTER
ANTI, F/B CLOCK WISE
RECUMBENT BLOCKING STONE
5 PACES, 5 ROD OPENINGS IN "RESPECT" ON APPROACHING TOMB ENTRANCE
(ALTOGETHER 8 PACES FROM (8) - WHERE APPROACH BEGINS)
3 PACES BEFORE RODS BEGIN "RESPECT"
(20) - STRAIGHT AHEAD WITH NO OPENINGS
(15) - RECORDED THESE AS LARGER THAN THE OTHERS
(19) - TURNS TO FACE ENTRANCE
COPYRIGHT: ANGELA LAKE - JAN. 2003
CAIRNHOLY I CHAMBERED LONG BARROW. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY.
24 JUNE 2002 (3PM-5PM). 2 SETS OF MOVEMENT
(ONE NUMBERED IN BLACK, ONE NUMBERED IN RED)

Ceremonies dowsed by Angie Lake at Cairn Holy

MAP

TWELVE APOSTLES (NEWBRIDGE)

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Newbridge**
Map: **NX 9470 7940** | Sheets: **E321 L84** | Lat: **55.0978N** | Long: **3.6517W**

One of Britain's largest stone circles, the Twelve Apostles are set in an important landscape of Neolithic monuments, including two cursuses (visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs), ring ditches, enclosures and mounds. It's an impressively spacious, flattened circle some 80m (262ft) in diameter, its sheer size making it difficult to photograph all at once, with large, solid-looking stones up to 1.9m (6ft) tall. Five stones are still upright of the 11 that remain, a 12th stone having been removed before 1837. All the stones are set with their flat faces in a line with the circumference. Intriguingly, in 1975 it was observed that

half of this ring of stones is a true circle with a diameter of 89m (292ft); the other is the arc of a much larger circle, drawn from a point on the circumference of the first. (Note: there is another stone circle of the same name in Yorkshire, see page 161.)

"When I first saw this circle in 1992, it was divided in two by a low hedge, the remains of which can still be seen today. Easily accessible, with a gate into the field." Anne Tate

LOUPIN' STANES & GIRDLE STANES

Stone Circles | Nearest Village: **Eskdalemuir**
Map: **NY 2570 9663** | Sheets: **E323 L79** | Lat: **55.25822N** | Long: **3.17057W**

The Loupin' Stanes and the Girdle Stanes are accessed from the same car park. From the Loupin' Stanes you can walk to the Girdle Stanes, either beside the river or across the fields following the route of what may have once been an avenue or stone row – or merely fortunately placed erratics.

LOUPIN' STANES

At NY 2570 9663, this lovely, small circle is nestled on pastureland just to the south of a bend in the White Esk. The 12 low stones form a flattened circle, 11.5 × 10.3m (37ft 8in × 33ft 9in) across. An "entrance" is apparently formed by two taller pillars, 1.6m (5ft 3in) high. The circle's name comes from the local story that "lads, and even a lass" would leap from one pillar to the other (at 2.5m/8ft apart, this seems unlikely!). The low, stony bank on which the stones are set may be field clearance.

GIRDLE STANES

On the bank of the White Esk at NY 2535 9615, this evocative circle has lost its western stones to the river (several can be seen on the riverbed). Eleven fallen stones and 13 standing stones survive, the tallest about 1.6m (5ft 3in) and the longest fallen stone around 2m (6½ft). The platform on which the stones stand may be a plantation bank or the result of field clearance. A good photograph can be taken from the stile on the walk.

Hidden Evidence: The Lochbrow Project

Kirsty Millican, Historic Environment Scotland

An apparently featureless cow field, Lochbrow is nonetheless one of my favourite archaeological sites in Scotland. Cropmarks, formed by the differential growth of crops over buried archaeology, are best captured from the air, and were first recorded at Lochbrow in 1992, indicating the presence of pits and ditches. These can be interpreted as a timber cursus monument (usually dating to the earlier Neolithic), at least one, if not two, timber circles (dating from the later Neolithic into the Bronze Age) and several round barrows (later prehistoric monuments). This was clearly an important location for a long time.

If you visit the site today (at NY 0951 8935) there is nothing to see. The cursus and timber circles were built of wood, so all that remains are the infilled pits dug to take the upright timbers. The cropmarks give us a rare glimpse into the activities of, and structures built by, our prehistoric ancestors – without aerial photography we would know nothing about this important group of monuments. A lot can be learned about sites like these by considering their place in the landscape. At Lochbrow the cursus in particular seems to mimic the dominant topography. By visiting the site it's been possible to suggest that the topography of this location likely influenced the use and functioning of these monuments, and perhaps the form they took. Ongoing work here involves investigating the possibility of additional sites and features not recorded by the cropmarks. Results so far are promising, and I'm excited by the notion that so much lies buried beneath our feet. With perseverance we may be able to add more to the story of this site.

BALLOCHMYLE

Rock Art | Nearest Village: **Mauchline**
Map: **NS 5112 2556** | Sheets: **E327 L70** | Lat: **55.50111N** | Long: **4.35863W**

This large, vertical, red sandstone rockface overlooking a tributary of the River Ayr contains some absolutely amazing and unusual rock art. Carved from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age, the art was only discovered in 1986 during vegetation clearance. There are several hundred cup-and-rings, many with deep cups and multiple rings, unusual square cups, ringed stars and curvilinear grooves. There is also modern graffiti. The site is near a quarry, just over 200m (656ft) south of the A76 and 260m (853ft) northeast of Ballochmyle Viaduct. There is a long stretch of cliff face at this location, and the site is subject to seasonal water flow, so GPS is recommended to find it.

Photo © Brian Kerr

Borders

BURGH HILL Alt Name: **Dod Burn**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Skelfhill**

Map: **NT 4701 0624** | Sheets: **E331 L79** | Lat: **55.34731N** | Long: **2.83714W**

In an area full of hill forts and prehistoric settlements, mostly Iron Age, it's nice to find this little egg-shaped circle, 16.5 × 13.4m (54 × 44ft). Thirteen stones remain standing of the 25 on site – none of them very large, ranging from a couple of centimetres to 0.8m (2ft 8in) above ground, and most with their wider face aligned on the egg-shaped perimeter. One of the prostrate stones is much larger, at 1.5m (5ft) long. Fine views to the Lammermuir Hills some 48km (30 miles) away. A good farm track takes you up almost to this stone setting.

Nearby | At NT 4681 0616, just 215m (705ft) further up the hill from Burgh Hill circle, the well-preserved **Burgh Hill** hill fort has magnificent 360-degree views and two massive ramparts with external ditches. There is evidence of a secondary settlement in the northeastern half of the interior, where hut circles can be seen, along with a standing stone.

If you're heading up to Burgh Hill from Hawick you may pass **Lord's Tree**, a damaged but still impressive cairn about 10m (33ft) across, its circular banks still remaining, at NT 4809 0957. The name was already traditional by the mid-19th century, but there's no tree here now. Within sight, on the opposite side of the road, is **Ca Knowe**, thought to be an ancient burial mound, and traditionally the site of the reading of the burgess roll after the perambulation of the marches.

DERE STREET Alt Name: Black Knowe Cairn

Round Cairn and Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Hownam**
Map: **NT 7506 1552** | Sheets: **OL16 L80** | Lat: **55.432930N** | Long: **2.395676W**

To make a day of it, start from the well-preserved hill fort Woden's Law (at NT 7677 1254), then walk along Dere Street Roman road to visit Pennymuir Roman camps, Falla Knowe cairn (an insignificant monument to the left of the track at NT 7471 1475, with a fence post in its middle), Dere Street cairn, Black Knowe standing stone, Trestle cairn and the stone circle Five Stanes. For a shorter visit, start from Falla Knowe.

Photo © Anne Tate

DERE STREET CAIRN AND STANDING STONE

At NT 7506 1552, to the left of the Roman road and just over the dry-stone wall, is Dere Street (also known as Black Knowe) cairn, measuring about 9m (29½ft) across and just 0.6m (2ft) high. Five boulders lie on its edge, with four more nearby, presumably removed from the cairn. Across the line of Dere Street, some 70m (230ft) to the east of this cairn, you will see the Black Knowe standing stone, at NT 7513 1554. While this stands only 0.75m (2½ft) high and looks like a natural boulder, it is likely to be a companion to the outlying stones of the cairn. Close by are five broken fragments of the same type of stone as the main stone; it's impossible to tell if they were broken from it.

TRESTLE CAIRN

At NT 7518 1612, Trestle (also known as Dere Street II and Plea Shank) is more a cairn than a stone circle and, while badly damaged in antiquity, is still an impressive site in a lovely ridge location. There are 17 stones (only two still earthfast) within the now demolished cairn, with another 15 broken stones scattered around the site. The two largest stones stand 0.75m (2½ft) tall.

FIVE STANES

Also known as Dere Street III, the Five Stanes circle is at NT 7526 1686, with five stones of which three are still standing. It's a small circle, about 6m (20ft) in diameter, with the biggest stone being 0.85m (2ft 10in). The moorland setting is lovely. Another three stones, some 15.5m (50ft) to the east, may originally have been part of the circle.

THE GLEBE STONE

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Yarrow**
Map: **NT 3526 2760** | Sheets: **E337 L73** | Lat: **55.53783N** | Long: **3.02734W**

Sited in a field just north of Yarrow Water and south of Whitehope Burn, the Glebe Stone is one of three stones close together just west of Yarrow village. It's a chunky stone, about 1.4m (4½ft) tall and up to 1.2m (4ft) wide. There are two possible cup-marks on one side. It was reported that a cairn containing skeletal remains once surrounded the stone, but there is no evidence of this today.

Photo © Ewen Rennie

Nearby | At NT 3481 2744, 482m (1,581ft) WSW of the Glebe Stone, is the **Yarrow Stone**; human bones are said to have been found buried underneath in about 1803. The skeletal remains are interesting in light of the 6th-century Latin inscription on one face: “This is the everlasting memorial. In this place lie the most famous princes Nudus and Dumnogenus. In this tomb lie the two sons of Liberalis.” Later in the 19th century, it was moved to Bowhill, then subsequently returned, having been marked by the chains used to move it.

At NT 3545 2775, 238m (780ft) ENE of the Glebe Stone, is the 1.6m (5ft 3in) **Warrior’s Rest** (Annan Street) stone, in the garden of the cottage named after it and viewable from the gate. Long stone cists found close by indicate that this stone marked the site of an early Christian cemetery. Bronze Age finds indicate that the area had been used for burial over many centuries. In 2003, two previously unremarked cup-marks were found on the eastern side of the stone.

MAP

STOBO KIRK

Possible Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Stobo**
Map: **NT 1826 3765** | Sheets: **E336 L72** | Lat: **55.62557N** | Long: **3.29965W**

One of the oldest churches in the Borders, and the most important church in the Upper Tweed valley in medieval times, this is famously the site where St Kentigern was supposed to have converted Merlin to Christianity. A number of possible standing stones built into the walls of the church include a long, horizontally placed stone in the west wall of the north aisle.

Photo © Nicola Didsbury

SHERIFFMUIR

Standing Stones | Nearest Town: **Peebles**
Map: **NT 2010 4006** | Sheets: **E336 L72** | Lat: **55.64748N** | Long: **3.27115W**

Standing just west of where Lyne Water joins the River Tweed, this is a pair of standing stones, about 2.2m (7ft) apart and aligned north– south. The northern stone is 1.2m (4ft) tall and the southern 1.3m (4ft 3in). Apparently there used to be further stones, about 0.3m (1ft) high, on a curving line running east, but there's no sign of them now.

"The menhirs are also known as Arthur and Merlin." Austen John Reid

Central Scotland

BROTHERS' STONES

Standing Stones | Nearest Village: **Smailholm**
Map: **NT 6190 3600** | Sheets: **E339 L74** | Lat: **55.61609N** | Long: **2.60645W**

This pair of standing stones are prominently sited, straddling the summit of Brotherstone Hill, and seem to be aligned with the Cow Stone further down the hill (see below). The southeast stone is 2.5m (8ft); the other, 14m (46ft) away, is just under 2m (6½ft) high.

Nearby | At NT 6216 3620, some 350m (1,148ft) ENE of the Brothers' Stones and clearly visible from there, is the **Cow Stone**, also known as Brotherstone Hill standing stone. It's an irregularly shaped, squarish stone, about 2 × 2m wide (6½ × 6½ft).

At NT 5966 3973, 4.3km (2¾ miles) northwest of the Brothers' Stones, is the 1.6m (5ft) **Purveshaugh** (Earlston) standing stone, sited against a wall a short way off the road. It has its own sign proclaiming it a "standing stone" and is a bit battered and misshapen, with good views of the Eildon Hills beyond.

East, West, Mid Lothian

NINE STONES RIG Alt Names: Johnscleugh, Crow Stones

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Cranshaws/Danskine**
Map: **NT 6254 6549** | Sheets: **E345 L67** | Lat: **55.88109N** | Long: **2.60035W**

This jumble of nine boulder-like stones in the Lammermuir Hills of East Lothian once formed a circle about 6.4m (21ft) in diameter. In 1979, a stone was placed in an empty hole (it was possibly the hole's original occupant). Local tradition held that treasure had been hidden in the circle, which might explain the less than pristine state of the place; according to an 1853 record, "various attempts, all unsuccessful, have been made to find it."

Photo © Ewen Rennie

EASTER BROOMHOUSE

Standing Stone | Nearest Town: **Dunbar**
Map: **NT 6801 7662** | Sheets: **E351 L67** | Lat: **55.98144N** | Long: **2.51428W**

Fine sea views across the fields from this 2.7m (9ft) red sandstone stone with three cup-marks on the western side. At its foot you can see deeply carved grooves caused by the cable of a steam plough.

Nearby | At NT 6168 7760, 6.4km (4 miles) west of the Easter Broomhouse stone, is **Kirklandhill** standing stone, a rugged 3.4m (11ft) upright in arable land just to the east of the A199/A198 junction.

CAIY STANE Alt Name: Camus Stone

Standing Stone | Nearest City: **Edinburgh (Fairmilehead)**
Map: **NT 2424 6836** | Sheets: **E350 L66** | Lat: **55.90234N** | Long: **3.21319W**

This impressive, 2.75m (9ft 3in) red sandstone monolith has six weathered but still visible cup-marks 0.5m (1½ft) from the ground on its eastern side (away

from the road). Today it stands captive in a cobbled semicircle on Caiystane View in south Edinburgh, but the hillside on which it stands was used in the Bronze Age; in 1840, a Mr Stuart recorded that “hundreds of skeletons were at that time found whilst making the roads”.

Nearby | At NT 2450 6923, 909m (just over ½ mile) NNE of the Caiy Stane, is the small **Buck Stane**. The **Cat Stane** is at NT 2745 7068, in the suburb of Inch and 4km (just under 2½ miles) ENE of the Caiy Stane. At NT 2828 7050, in Midlothian and 4.6km (2¾ miles) ENE of the Caiy Stane, is the **Ravenswood Avenue** standing stone.

HULY HILL Alt Name **Newbridge**

Standing Stones & Round Cairn | Nearest Village: **Newbridge**
Map: **NT 1234 7261** | Sheets: **E350 L65** | Lat: **55.93851N** | Long: **3.40486W**
Kenneth Brophy

Huly Hill sits west of the junction of the A8 and the M8/M9, under the flightpath of Edinburgh Airport. To the south, a small service area with a petrol station and a McDonald's. To the north, a series of luxury car showrooms. Industrial units abound. It's a Ballardian dystopia, the monument trapped amid the infrastructure of the car. Surprisingly little is known about this setting of three standing stones, with a circular barrow, tumulus or cairn offset. About 30m (98ft) in diameter, it rises to a height of 3m (10ft), having been "tidied up" with a modern wall at some point since it was dug into by Daniel Wilson in 1830. A bronze "spearhead" or dagger was found along with fragments of bone and charcoal. When Fred Coles surveyed the monument in 1899, he was "unable to ascertain the true extent or location of this excavation, or the fate of the contents". It was thought possible that the three remaining standing stones were once part of a circle, but geophysical surveys in the 1970s and 2000s confirm there have only ever been three, and no ditch, either. Two stones are 2m (6½ft) tall and the third 1.3m (4ft 3in). East of the motorway, 320m (1,050ft) away on an industrial estate, at NT 1265 7262, is a fourth stone, 3m (10ft) high, which may, or may not, be connected to the site. There is no interpretation board or sign, and apparently no expectation that anyone will visit, although thousands of drivers and passengers must see this site every day, as do people at an adjacent bus stop, dog walkers, burger-munchers at McDonald's and the pilots of the planes that fly over it. The stones and encircling wall are subject to graffiti, crowded out by the modern world. It takes an effort of will to imagine what this monument might once have been like: a place of death and memory. Now it is a place of lorries, fast food wrappers and paint.

Top 10 Urban Prehistory Sites

Kenneth Brophy, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology, University of Glasgow

1. The Calderstones, Liverpool: The monument was dismantled, moved and re-erected in a confused roadside arrangement in the 19th century, then moved again (twice) in the 1950s into a greenhouse, before going into storage in 2017 ahead of a grand re-erection beside Calderstones Mansion House.

2. Balfarg, Glenrothes, Fife: One of the largest henge monuments in Scotland and now, along with two standing stones and some cut-down telegraph poles, the reconstructed centrepiece of a 1980s housing estate.

3. The Stone of Mannan, Clackmannan: A huge standing stone with a smaller stone fixed on top located beside a tollbooth, moved there in 1833 from a more rural location in Lookabootye Brae; it looks like a huge penis.

4. Ravenswood Avenue standing stone, Edinburgh: A standing stone that as recently as 1903 was surrounded by fields and grazing cattle but is now trapped in a cage on the pavement in a 1930s housing estate.

5. Sandy Road, Perth: This kerbed cairn was excavated in the 1960s, removed ahead of housing development, then reconstructed in its original location in the form of a garden landscaped stone circle in a cul de sac.

6. Huly Hill, Newbridge, Edinburgh: A landscaped barrow with three satellite standing stones situated beside a service station and major motorway intersection, and beneath the flightpath of Edinburgh Airport.

7. King Arthur's Round Table, Penrith: Henge monument near Penrith that was drawn fancifully by Stukeley and then converted into a tea garden by the owner of the neighbouring Crown Inn in the 19th century.

8. The Dagon Stone, Darvel, Ayrshire: A weird stone topped with a stone ball; it has been moved at least three times since prehistory, was once covered in paint by Ludovic Mann and now sits across from a Chinese takeaway.

9. Carreg Coetan Arthur, Pembrokeshire: Portal dolmen situated amid a very middleclass bungaloid area of the village of Newport, overlooked by gardens and constantly monitored by men of a certain age mowing their lawns and washing their 4 × 4s.

10. The Cochno Stone, Clydebank: One of the largest rock art panels in Britain, painted in five colours by Ludovic Mann in 1937, then covered

with dozens of scratched names like a huge stone visitor book, it was buried by the authorities in 1965 but never forgotten.

South Lanarkshire

CAIRNPAPPLE HILL

Round Cairn | Nearest Village: **Torphichen**
Map: **NS 9872 7175** | Sheets: **E349 L65** | Lat: **55.92811N** | Long: **3.62251W**

Impressive views at Cairnpapple Hill, West Lothian: on a clear day, you can see from Bass Rock in the North Sea to Goatfell (Arran's highest peak) and the mountains of Arran in the Firth of Clyde, south to the Border hills, and northwest beyond Stirling to the Trossachs and Schiehallion. This is one of mainland Scotland's most important archaeological sites, in use as a place of ritual and burial for over 4,000 years. It developed over five different phases, indicating the enduring significance of this place. In the first phase, a simple cremation cemetery had seven small pits in an arc. In the second phase, a henge was built as well as an oval setting of 24 standing stones. In the third phase, *c*. 1800–1700BC, the standing stones were taken down and a cairn was built to cover two central cists. The fourth phase involved enlarging the cairn to twice its original diameter, with the first-phase pits making up its western arc. The fifth and final phase is represented by four extended burials, aligned almost east–west; these have been dated to the Iron Age or first century AD, and are reminiscent of early Christian burials. The two cist burials have been covered by a modern casing, creating the appearance of a huge tumulus. Access to the inside of the chamber is via a steep ladder with handrail.

Nearby | At NS 9684 7250, 2km (1¼ miles) WNW of Cairnpapple Hill, is the enigmatic **Torphichen Stone**, also known as the Sanctuary or Refuge Stone. Standing in the churchyard, this small, squarish stone is believed to be prehistoric, and possibly from Cairnpapple. It has a number of cup-marks on the east face; on the top is an incised cross. Said to have been reused in the 4th century by St Ninian and, by the Irish St Feichin or Fechin during the 6th–7th century, it is thought to have marked a place of sanctuary. Other stones believed to have marked the boundaries of the sanctuary area include the **Gormyre Stone** (at NS 9806 7311) and the **Westfield Farm Refuge Stone** (at NS 9437 7211).

NORMANGILL

Henge | Nearest Village: **Crawford**
Map: **NS 9710 2153** | Sheets: **E329 L72** | Lat: **55.48205N** | Long: **3.62739W**

Despite the road (originally a railway track) running right through it, removing a strip about 11m (36ft) wide, this henge in South Lanarkshire is one of Scotland's best examples of a Class II henge (one with two diametrically opposed entrances). Although you could probably drive through it without noticing, once you know it's there the banks and internal ditch are clear to see. It's about 61 × 55m (200 × 180ft) across and has two unusually wide entrances, each measuring

23m (75ft) across at the gap in the bank, and 17m (55ft) at the gap in the ditch.

The Lives of Stones

Anne Tate, Anglo-Saxon sculptured stone and rock art enthusiast

While the original significance of standing stones may be lost, they are an enduring reminder of long-vanished people and cultures. The Megalithic Portal bears witness to what can happen when time erodes meaning, with horror stories of stones broken up for building material, and stone circles, such as Kemp Howe in Shap, blown up or dragged aside to make way for modern developments; others were destroyed for fear of superstition and magic, cutting the past from the present.

Some stones have had a gentler transition through time, undergoing a process of continuous adaptation and change, in which their purpose was amended and enhanced to give them new life and meaning. Megaliths often dominate their setting, demanding attention, and many ancient sites have been reused because of their special significance – Cairnpapple in West Lothian was a henge in 3000BC, by 2000bc it was a burial complex, and in 1000AD it was used by early Christians – each reuse adding a layer of significance.

As Christianity took hold in Britain during the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, people reused standing stones as memorials, assimilating ancient beliefs to magnify their own. In Powys, Maen Madoc, standing next to the Sarn Helen Roman road, was recarved to mark a Christian burial, and bears a probable 6th-century Latin epitaph to “Dervacus, son of Justus”. The Four Pillar Stones near Pontfaen in Pembrokeshire each bear an incised cross of different design; the Laggangarn stones in Dumfries and Galloway are both carved with a Latin cross. In Ireland, the 5m (16ft) prehistoric Doonfeeny Pillar in County Mayo was recut with two Christian crosses. By permanently rededicating a pagan stone to God, it was given a double meaning, perhaps more symbolic than its destruction would have been.

Crosses were added to existing standing stones to signal them as way-markers and as places to give thanks, an example being Bennet’s Cross in Devon, a 1.7m (5½ft) tall standing stone that was modified in the 15th century. Many stones were reused as gateposts or rubbing stones. Others have been moved into churchyards or churches, even being incorporated into their fabric. The 12th-century Stobo Kirk, in the Scottish Borders,

may have one or more standing stones in its external walls. Similarly, the church of St Mael and St Sulien in Denbighshire not only has a standing stone built into the east wall of the porch but also hosts several ancient crosses, one with a possibly cupmarked base.

As land boundaries became more defined, stones such as Bennet's Cross and Bedd Morris in Cwm Gwaun, Pembrokeshire were coopted and re-inscribed as parish boundary markers. In more recent times, the Victorians enthusiastically relocated standing stones and burial chambers – the Wallington Hall stone in Northumberland was uprooted from a nearby Bronze Age cairn in the 19th century and used to dress a garden pond.

And so the lives of stones continue, with a number of recently erected stone circles, and modern megaliths occasionally used as grave markers, such as those in Kensal Green Cemetery. Cut from stone to replicate the past, but living far into the future.

Nearby | At NS 9709 2153, some 600m (1,968ft) SSW of Normangill henge, is a ruined cairn on a crest of **Normangill Rig**. A 19th-century record states that most of the stones in the cairn were reused to build field walls in 1855; at the same time, "the bones of a man of large stature" were uncovered. It's still around 26m (85ft) across and 2m (6½ft) tall, with a dry-stone wall forming a large, semicircular loop around the cairn.

West Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde

SIGHTHILL PARK Alt Name: **Springburn Stones**

Modern Stone Circle | Nearest City: **Glasgow**
Map: **NS 5969 6642** | Sheets: **E342 L64** | Lat: **55.87045N** | Long: **4.24394W**

Although modern circles are not usually featured in this guide to Neolithic and Bronze Age sites, Sighthill is included here as Scotland's best-known modern stone circle and the first astronomically aligned circle to be built in the UK in over 3,000 years. It was constructed in the late 1970s by amateur astronomer and science writer Duncan Lunan and the Glasgow Parks Astronomy Project, to represent the rising and setting of the sun and moon across Glasgow. Although the project was never fully completed, the stones (from Beltmoss quarry in Kilsyth) all still exist. Sighthill Park is currently undergoing redevelopment and the circle was taken down in April 2016. It is due to be re-erected in the new park, on the original choice of site, which was previously unsuitable due to the tower blocks interfering with the sightlines. Now the blocks have gone, and the circle should be in place by 2019.

THE COCHNO STONE Alt Name: **Whitehill 1**

Rock Art | Nearest City: **Glasgow**
Map: **NS 5045 7388** | Sheets: **E342 L64** | Lat: **55.93464N** | Long: **4.39559W**

The Cochno Stone (the name coming from the Gaelic for "little cups") is one of the most spectacular and extensive panels of rock art in Britain. It's located in an urban park in Faifley, a housing estate in Clydebank, but you won't be able to see it because, apart from a few brief days in 2015 and 2016, it has been buried beneath a protective 1m (3ft 3in) layer of soil and turf since 1965. The undulating surface of the soft gritstone (sandstone) outcrop, about 15 × 8m (50 × 26ft), is covered in scores of cupmarks, cup-and-ring marks, spirals and other unusual motifs including an incised cross and two four-toe footprints. The 2016 excavation resulted in a very high-resolution scan of the stone, which will be used to create a replica to be displayed on site.

Photo © Cezary Namirski

Nearby | Although the Cochno Stone has now been re-covered, there are other cup-and-ring marked rocks within 1km (0.6 miles) to explore: **Auchnacraig 1** at NS 5028 7365; **Auchnacraig 4** at NS 5029 7362; **Whitehill 3** at NS 5115 7386; **Whitehill 4** at NS 5130 7398; and **Whitehill 5** at NS 5138 7403.

Stirling

GRANNY KEMPOCK Alt Names: The Kempock Stone, The Lang Stane of Gourock

Standing Stone | Nearest Town: **Gourock**
Map: **NS 2408 7786** | Sheets: **E341 L63** | Lat: **55.96139N** | Long: **4.81982W**

Nowadays surrounded by buildings and set behind railings, this 1.8m (6ft) tall mica-schist standing stone would once have been in a prominent position on the clifftop overlooking Kempock Point. Its resemblance to a hooded figure is what lies behind the evocative name “Granny Kempock”. It’s said that those about to embark on a sea voyage would walk round the stone seven times, chanting a verse requesting good fortune and safe passage; and newly-weds would also pass round the stone for good luck and a happy marriage. In 1662, one Mary Lamont, who was later burned as a witch, confessed to planning with others to throw it in the sea.

Photo © Peggy Edwards

RANDOLPHFIELD

Standing Stones | Nearest City: **Stirling**
Map: **NS 7944 9244** | Sheets: **E366 L57** | Lat: **56.10945N** | Long: **3.94019W**

Outside the main police station in Stirling, these two stones are 1.2m (4ft) and 1.1m (3ft 8in) high and about 45m (147ft) apart. Thought to be prehistoric, local tradition has long linked them to a skirmish fought in 1314 on the eve of the Battle of Bannockburn between Sir Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, and an English force. At least one of the stones was moved to this site before the police station was built. The larger stone shows signs of having been cut and re-cemented back together. No prehistoric material was found when the site was excavated in 2014.

DOUNE Alt Name: Glenhead Farm

Stone Row | Nearest Village: **Doune**
Map: **NN 7549 0046** | Sheets: **E366 L57** | Lat: **56.18042N** | Long: **4.00737W**

Originally thought to be part of a larger monument, this alignment of three prehistoric stones extends for 9m (29½ft). The central stone is 1.2m (4ft) high and has more than 20 cupmarks on both its top and western side (although some are hard to see), and is flanked by two leaning stones that would be about 2m (6½ft) tall if upright. A block at the northern end of the alignment may have split off the northernmost stone. Park at the David Stirling SAS memorial opposite. The row is in an arable field, so access is not available when crops are growing.

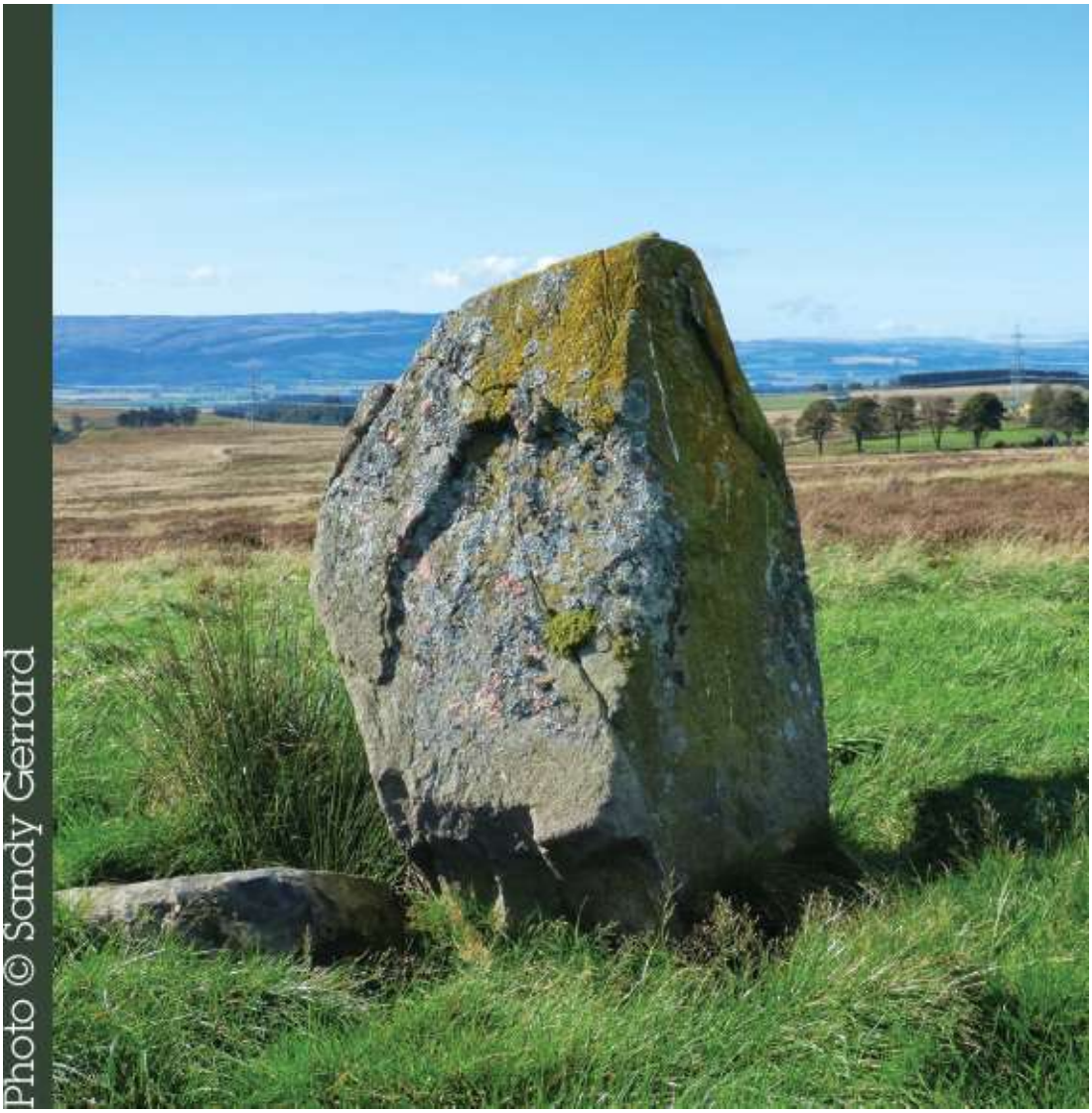
Photo © Sandy Gerrard

SHERIFF MUIR ROW Alt Names: **Wallace Stone, Lairhill Stone Row** | Nearest Town: **Dunblane**

Map: **NN 8324 0226** | Sheets: **E366 L57** | Lat: **56.19857N** | Long: **3.88344W**

This 68m (223ft) row is aligned southwest–northeast and includes five stones, although it's thought that one stone might be missing from the alignment. The Wallace Stone is 1.8m (6ft) high and the only one still standing; another stone has 19 cupmarks. This was the site of a battle in 1715 and it is also traditionally believed to have been the gathering place for Scottish troops before the Battle of Stirling Bridge (1297).

"This alignment once stood beside the major routeway from Stirling toward the north of Scotland. It is probable that this was also a significant prehistoric routeway." Sandy Gerrard



KINNELL PARK Alt Name: **Achmore**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Killin**

Map: **NN 5770 3280** | Sheets: **OL48 L51** | Lat: **56.4658N** | Long: **4.31125W**

A delightful circle in parkland southeast of the River Dochart, overlooking the confluence of the Dochart and the Lochay, and the western end of Loch Tay, where steeply sloping woodland forms a sheltered bowl. It's just 10m (33ft) across, with six stones between 1.4m (4ft 7in) and 2m (6½ft) in height. The northernmost stone has three cupmarks on the top. The circle's air of tidy perfection must have been appreciated by the owners of Kinnell House – the

Macnabs of Macnab – in the days when an antiquarian feature was a must-have for a country estate.

Nearby | About 5.4km (3.3 miles) WNW of Kinnell, at **Duncroisk**, in Glen Lochay, there's a long, prominent, ridge of quartzite schist rock outcrop centred at NN 5322 3582, with eight groups of cups and rings. The largest rings are 0.25m (9in) in diameter; one rock has 58 cups and another has 60. There are around 200 motifs in total.

More rock art can be found nearby: **Duncroisk 2** at NN 5313 3584; **Corrycharmaig East 4** at NN 5310 3582; **Corrycharmaig East 2** at NN 5294 3588; **Corrycharmaig 3** at NN 5278 3549; **Duncroisk 1** at NN 5311 3640.

Fife

TUILYIES Alt Name: Torryburn

Stone Setting | Nearest Village: **Tuilyies**
Map: **NT 0291 8658** | Sheets: **E367 L65** | Lat: **56.06217N** | Long: **3.56084W**

An unusual setting of four stones, with a 2.4m (8ft) tall standing stone accompanied by three smaller boulders arranged in a triangle just to its south. The spectacular standing stone has many cupmarks on the eastern face, and deep, weathered grooves cut by the rain.

BALBIRNIE Alt Name: Druid's Circle

Cairn Circle | Nearest Town: **Glenrothes**
Map: **NO 2859 0297** | Sheets: **E370 L59** | Lat: **56.21391N** | Long: **3.15298W**

Moved from its original site, 125m (410ft) to the northwest, when the A92 in Fife was widened, and reconstructed to the same layout, this is an interesting, easy-to-visit suburban stone circle. A multiphase site with activity beginning *c*. 3000 BC, the earliest phase was the circle of eight standing stones (of an original 10) associated with mostly female cremation burials. The cist burials within the circle are later (the cup-and-ring-marked cist stone is a replica). Cremated bones, a jet button and beads, a food vessel and a flint knife were found during excavations. The final phase saw the interior of the circle filled with cairn material, which contained sherds of cinerary urns and cremated bone.

BALFARG

Henge | Nearest Town: **Glenrothes**
Map: **NO 2820 0312** | Sheets: **E370 L59** | Lat: **56.21524N** | Long: **3.15929W**

Not far from Balbirnie is the equally suburban Balfarg henge. The site began life *c*. 4000BC when pits were dug to hold sherds of pottery, burnt wood and bone. Later came a 60m (196ft) ditched causewayed enclosure, one of Scotland's

largest henge earthworks, with a setting of 16 massive posts up to 4m (13ft) tall. Concentric interior post and stone arrangements are complex, with evidence for multiple timber circles, and it may be that one or more stone circles were then added, of which one stone remains today. The other stone on the site, offset from the circle, is considered to be an entrance marker. The final phase saw a burial in the henge centre, with a beaker and a flint knife, marked today by a flat stone. The site has been sympathetically developed, posts indicating the position of the timber setting.

Photo © Sandy Gerrard

Nearby | At NO 2848 0314, 282m (925ft) east of Balfarg henge, is the **Balfarg Riding School** mortuary enclosure and henge. Wooden posts show the positions of post-holes. The second of two timber structures on the site was later covered by a mound and a ditch cut around it.

LUNDIN LINKS Alt Name: Standing Stones of Lundy

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Lundin**
Map: **NO 4048 0272** | Sheets: **E370 L59** | Lat: **56.21332N** | Long: **2.96121W**

Surely one of the most iconic and spectacular stone settings in Scotland, if not Britain, the towering stones of Lundin Links are probably the remains of a four-poster stone circle with a diameter of 16.5m (54ft). Only three stones remain, standing in manicured isolation on the third fairway of the Ladies' Golf Club. They're visible from the road, but the club is happy to allow access as long as you ask permission, and even have a photocopied information sheet. These red sandstone giants are huge, forming two sides of a rectangle: the NNW stone is

5.2m (17ft) tall, the SSW 4.6m (15ft) and the SSE 4.3m (14ft) tall and 2.1m (7ft) broad. The NNE stone is missing, although it lay by its stump in 1792, broken by treasure hunters. Excavation here in the 18th century found cists, bones (including a skull), and possibly a jet button (now lost).

Photo © Jackie Bates

Angus

ABERLEMNO

Standing Stones | Nearest Village: **Aberlemno**
Map: **NO 5228 5592** | Sheets: **E389 L54** | Lat: **56.69201N** | Long: **2.78136W**

"From October to Easter the stones are all covered by wooden boxes to protect them from frost, so save your visit till the summer!" Ewen Rennie

Aberlemno in Angus has four Pictish stones, one in the churchyard and the others beside the B9134, 365m (¼ mile) away to the NNW. There are many Pictish stones listed on the Megalithic Portal website but they are outside the scope of this guide; however, the stone at NO 5228 5592 has six cupmarks on the back, near the bottom, that presumably predate the Pictish carvings (a serpent, a double disc with Z-rod, a mirror and a comb).

Photo © Sandy Gerrard

MEIKLE KENNY Alt Names: **Baldovie, West Schurroch**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Kirkton of Kingoldrum**
Map: **NO 3176 5415** | Sheets: **E381 L53** | Lat: **56.6741N** | Long: **3.11522W**

Three separate four-poster circles or stone settings, known collectively in the 18th century as the “Druids Alters”, lie in an almost straight line near the northeastern edge of West Schurroch Ridge. Meikle Kenny A (at NO 3176 5415) is now a lone standing stone, 1.4m (4ft 7in) tall, its three companions having been removed around 1842. In the woods to the east, the two neighbouring settings are now both reduced to three smallish stones. Meikle Kenny B is at NO 3180 5417, 45m (148ft) to the northeast, and Meikle Kenny C is a further 21m (69ft) in the same direction at NO 3182 5418.

Photo © Golux

BALGARTHNO Alt Names: Farm of Corn, Myrekirk

Stone Circle | Nearest City: **Dundee**
Map: **NO 3533 3161** | Sheets: **E380 L54** | Lat: **56.47215N** | Long: **3.05134W**

On the outskirts of Dundee in the Charleston housing estate, this 8m (26ft) ring has nine, heavily weathered stones, one of which is standing and 1.5m (5ft) high. Fragments of flint and jet found here are kept at the National Museum of Scotland. The stones are now fenced in to protect them from vandalism.

Nearby | At NO 3458 3102, 952m (over ½ mile) WSW of Balgarthno, the **Devil's Stone** (in Perth and Kinross) is a bulbous standing stone visible from the road through some railings that bridge a gap in a stone wall.

Perth and Kinross

BANDIRRAN Alt Name: Woodburn Cottage

Stone Circles | Nearest Village: **Balbeggie**
Map: **NO 2091 3099** | Sheets: **E380 L53** | Lat: **56.46439N** | Long: **3.28516W**

Set among pine and birch trees close to the wood's western edge, this circle may once have had at least 10 stones. Today, eight are visible, with two of them remaining upright. Nearby, to the east, is another small group of stones, two standing and one fallen. In 1997, a survey by the Perthshire Society of Natural Science suggested that these could form part of a 14.5m (48ft) circle of seven stones.

Nearby | At NO 1520 2626, 7.4km (4½ miles) WSW of Bandirran, is **Murrayshall** standing stone, set in arable land on top of a low ridge. It's a nicely shaped stone, 1.8m (6ft) tall and 1.2m (4ft) wide at its widest point, with a tapering top. In the same field, 30m (98ft) northeast of this stone, the remains of two settlements and a possible roundhouse can be seen as cropmarks in the right conditions.

MONCRIEFFE

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Bridge of Earn**
Map: **NO 1360 1933** | Sheets: **E369 L58** | Lat: **56.35838N** | Long: **3.39990W**

In the grounds of Moncrieffe House, where it was re-erected in 1980, this was often listed (controversially) as a recumbent circle, but is now thought to be more typical of Perthshire's small stone circles. This multiphase monument began as a henge with a ring of post-holes, possibly then followed by a kerbed cairn ringed by standing stones, which was then replaced by an eight-stone circle. A stone marked with 15 cups, originally sited in the circle, is now located 9.6m (31½ft) to the west.

FOWLIS WESTER Alt Name: Moor of Ardoch

Megalithic Complex | Nearest Village: **Fowlis Wester**

Map: **NN 9243 2492** | Sheets: **OL47 L52/58** | Lat: **56.4042N** | Long: **3.74471W**

Photo © Christopher Bickerton

An interesting complex on the moor of Ardoch. The easternmost monument has two circular settings: the kerb of a denuded cairn surrounded by a ruined ring about 4.9 × 5.7m (16ft × 18ft 8in) across. A slab on the SSW side of the kerb has three cupmarks. Northeast of the kerb cairn is a fallen outlier with a cupmark. A second, prostrate stone lies to the west, close to the western circle, 25m (82ft) from the eastern one. The western circle, also likely to be a cairn, shows signs of having been blasted – the pair of stones at its northern end are split fragments.

Four stones of this circle survive, but excavation in 1939 traced the pits of seven other stones.

Investigating the Forteviot Ceremonial Landscape

Andy Burnham, founder and Editor of the Megalithic Portal

At Forteviot in Perthshire one of the most extensive prehistoric ceremonial landscapes in Britain has been under investigation by the University of Glasgow since 2007. Sites include a palisaded enclosure dating to the later Neolithic (around 2800BC) and measuring around 270m (885ft) in diameter – as big as five football fields. This was marked out with around 150 massive oak posts perhaps 4–6m (13–20ft) high. An avenue just 4m (13ft) wide led in from the north – imagine ceremonially processing this narrow space and the feeling of awe on entering a vast arena.

The Neolithic cremation cemetery here is the largest known in Scotland, which was subsequently surrounded by another timber circle, still over 40m (131ft) across, again marked out with huge oak posts. Later, an earthen henge was built over this circle, with a large ditch up to 2m (6½ft) deep and 7m (23ft) wide. The complex included two other henges, and another circular enclosure (not classed as a henge) immediately to the northwest of the palisaded enclosure was excavated in 2010. This had two concentric ditches that once held timber fences, a fallen standing stone and, at its centre, three adjoining stone coffins (a triple cist) next to a pit containing a complete beaker.

Both large henges showed later activity, including a Bronze Age stone cist (2100– 2000BC) sealed with a large capstone with an unusual symbol carved on the underside. This was lifted in 2009, revealing a burial with a rich collection of grave goods, including a bronze dagger, wooden containers and what seems to be a leather bag containing a small knife and a “strike-a-light” kit, presumably for use in the afterlife (see page 168). Large numbers of meadowsweet flowerheads and stalks were found in the cist, left there for the dead, and placing the burial in the late summer. The cist was lined with water-worn pebbles and larger quartz pebbles, followed by a layer of birch bark on which the body (which has been lost) was placed.

In 2012 the excavations extended to nearby Leadketty where another

equally huge palisaded enclosure, with a henge and a small four-poster timber structure were found. The four-poster seems to have been surrounded by a timber circle, possibly a high-status house rather than a ceremonial structure. Excavations in 2014–15 at Wellhill, near Dunning, found a further cist burial and early Neolithic pits associated with a possible field ditch and faint linear marks probably made by an ard (handheld plough that does not turn over the soil). Evidence for ploughing and fields in Neolithic Britain is incredibly rare, according to project directors Dr Kenneth Brophy and Dr Dene Wright, both from the University of Glasgow. The finds suggest a farming economy had taken hold here just a few generations after farming began in the region, in 4000BC. Further radiocarbon-dating showed hunter-gatherer activity some two millennia earlier in the form of a very rare example of a Mesolithic pit alignment.

Find out more about the Strathearn Environs and Royal Forteviot (SERF) Project at:
www.gla.ac.uk/schools/humanities/research/archaeologyresearch/projects/serf/

MONZIE

Kerb Cairn | Nearest Village: **Gilmerton**
Map: **NN 8816 2417** | Sheets: **OL47 L52/58** | Lat: **56.39651N** | Long: **3.81349W**

In open pasture dominated by the Knock of Crieff, this kerb cairn with nine large, boulder-like stones is defined by a 5.5m (18ft 5in) diameter kerb. A large prostrate outlier, about 2.1 × 1.5m (6ft 10in × 5ft) lies 3m (10ft) to the southwest. Decorated with around 60 cup and cup-and-ring marks (some with up to four rings), it was found during excavations in 1938 to be connected to the circle by a causeway of stone cobbles. By 1966 many of the smaller stones associated with this cairn circle (in legend said to be impossible to count) were no longer evident. The cist within these stones, also now removed, contained burnt bone and quartz fragments; quartz can also be found around the stones.

Photo © Christopher Bickerton

Nearby | At NN 8798 2431, 227m (745ft) to the WNW of Monzie kerb cairn, is a standing stone called the **Witches' Stone**. It's in a field south of the drive leading up to Monzie Castle.

DALGINROSS Alt Names: **The Court Knoll, The Roundel, Dunmhoid, Muirend**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Comrie**
Map: **NN 7803 2126** | Sheets: **OL47 L52** | Lat: **56.36791N** | Long: **3.97622W**

A rather charming four-poster in a very damp and mossy clearing beside the road (originally part of a wood), between some houses at the southeastern edge of Dalginross village, next to the cemetery. In 1876, only one stone was still standing, although all were re-erected after a stone cist was found in front of the largest stone. By 1911 two stones had fallen once more and left where they lay. Today, only one remains standing. These stones sit upon a circular platform just above the level of the road, which may be a modern feature. Dunmhoid is said locally to mean "hill of judgement".

CLACH NA TIOMPAN

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Gilmerton**
Map: **NN 8296 3286** | Sheets: **E379 L52** | Lat: **56.47327N** | Long: **3.90157W**

Two stones, the tallest 1.3m (4ft 3in) high, survive in this small four-poster circle enclosing a cairn. Excavation discovered the socket holes of the other stones, one lying nearby to the south. To the north, on the other side of the track, is a long cairn once measuring 58 × 11.5m (190 × 38ft), and 1.5m (5ft) high, with four chambers. It was damaged when the road was driven through it in the 19th century.

Nearby | At NN 8259 3299, 391m (¼ mile) west of Clach na Tiompan, is **Glenshervie Burn**, half of another, rather wrecked four-poster stone circle.

ACHARN FALLS Alt Name: Greenland

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Acharn**
Map: **NN 7679 4249** | Sheets: **E379 L51/52** | Lat: **56.5582N** | Long: **4.00628W**

It's a fair climb up from the village (there and back will take you around an hour and a half) but well worth it for the fabulous views of the mountains and Loch Tay. About 8.8m (29ft) in diameter, the circle is quite ruinous, but the spectacular setting gives all the atmosphere you could want. Seven stones remain of nine, with four still standing; the tallest 1.75m (5ft 8in). A stone wall may contain remains of the others.

Photo © Christopher Bickerton

Nearby | On the way up, and a good place to take a rest, is the **Acharn Burn** cairn at NN 7607 4294.

CROFT MORAIG

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Kenmore**
Map: **NN 7977 4727** | Sheets: **E379 L51/52** | Lat: **56.60185N** | Long: **3.95999W**

Croft Moraig is a fascinating and complex site, with a stone circle and an oval-shaped stone setting overlying an earlier timber structure, illustrating the reuse and range of monuments over the Neolithic and early Bronze Age periods. Excavations in 1965 showed it had three phases of construction. In the earliest phase, 14 timber posts estimated to be about 2m high, were set in a penannular (horseshoe) arrangement measuring about 8m × 7m (26 × 23ft), which may have had a central hearth. These posts were later replaced by eight stones in a 7 × 6m (23 × 20ft) oval. An outlying slab, located on the surrounding bank, has 21 cups and two cup-and-rings. The third phase was the addition of an outer circle, 12m (39ft) in diameter, of nine graded stones and two outlying stones (one of which has now fallen), which form an entrance. This outer circle also incorporates three boulders from an earlier phase, making a circle of 12 stones. Two deep burial

pits are just outside the circle.

CARSE FARM Alt Names: **Dull, Weem**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Kenmore**
Map: **NN 8022 4873** | Sheets: **E379 L52** | Lat: **56.61507N** | Long: **3.95335W**

"Best to visit when the field has just been harvested and the farmer is in a good mood. I raised a hare as I was crossing to the stones." Hamish

In a field beside the road, just outside the village of Dull, the little Carse Farm 1 four-poster forms a rectangle 3.9 × 2.7m (12ft 9in × 8ft 10in). The tallest stone, in the southeast and 1.8m (6ft) high, has three cupmarks, while the northeast stone has 17 cups. Curiously, all the cups are carved on top of the stones rather on their vertical faces. Excavation led to the discovery of a pit full of cremated bone and charcoal, along with a collared urn with geometric decoration.

Nearby | At NN 8028 4846, 270m (885ft) to the SSE of Carse Farm 1, is another circle, **Carse Farm 2**, of which only one stone still stands, with a further two cupmarked stones half-buried.

EAST CULT

Stone Row | Nearest Village: **Caputh**
Map: **NO 0725 4216** | Sheets: **E379 L52** | Lat: **56.5622N** | Long: **3.51075W**

On the crest of a ridge, just to the west of East Cult Farm, stands what might be the remains of a stone row accompanied by a profusely cupmarked boulder. Today, a pair of stones stand about 9m (29ft) apart; the western stone is 1.9m (6ft 3in) high and the taller, eastern stone reaches 2.15m (7ft). The cupmarked boulder, which may or may not have stood upright, has 130 cupmarks and a dumbbell (two cups joined by a groove) on its upper face, and three cupmarks on the eastern side.

Nearby | At NO 0449 4106, 3km (1¾ miles) WSW of East Cult, the **Newtyle** (Dunkeld) standing stones are a pair of roughly playing-card or lozenge-shaped stones, close beside the A984 and often partially concealed by the bracken. The taller, westernmost stone is 2.1m (6ft 10in) high, tapering to a point; the other is flat-topped. It has been suggested that the two stones align with midsummer sunset, and also that the very dissimilar shapes of the pair could be interpreted as symbolizing male/ female aspects.

LUNDIN FARM

Megalithic Cluster | Nearest Village: **Aberfeldy**
Map: **NN 8807 5057** | Sheets: **OL49 L52** | Lat: **56.63354N** | Long: **3.82637W**

Several sites lie in close proximity at this location. Walking along the track from the A827 main road you will find a single standing stone, known as Tomtayewen, at NN 8783 5059. A pair of small standing stones (the eastern one recently moved by 2.5m/8ft 2in, the western one still in situ) lies by the side of the road at NN 8802 5062, with a cupmarked stone between them. Then, at NN 8807 5057, is the Lundin Farm stone circle, a really delightful four-poster set on a little raised mound above the fields, accessed across a stream by a sturdy wooden bridge. Its stones, which originally surrounded a cairn and now grow around a tree, are 2.2m (7ft 3in), 1.4m (4ft 8in), 1.45m (4ft 10in) and 1.15m (3ft 9in) tall respectively. A further stone with 43 cupmarks lies 30m (98ft) to the southeast at NN 8807 5054.

Photo © Golux

CLACHAN AN DIRIDH Alt Name: **Fonab Moor**

Stone Circle | Nearest Town: **Pitlochry**
Map: **NN 9251 5574** | Sheets: **OL49 L52** | Lat: **56.681N** | Long: **3.75612W**

High on the hillside above Pitlochry, the name of this four-poster means “stones of the ascent”, which feels extremely apposite after the climb up to get here. Once the site would have had spectacular views down to the Tay and the Grampians, but it’s now in the middle of a mature plantation, although still impressive and atmospheric in its forest clearing. Three of the stones are standing, the biggest 1.7m (5½ft) tall and 1.8m (5ft 10in) wide, but just 0.4m (1ft 3in) thick. Fragments of the fourth can be seen scattered on the ground. In 2012, extensive geophysical and laser scanning took place at the site. The results suggest some sub-surface archaeology, but an excavation is yet to be carried out.

Photo © Golux

Nearby | At NN 9462 5211, 4.2km (2.6 miles) southeast of Clachan an Diridh, **Clach na Croiche**, also known as Balnaguard, standing stone was probably once part of a stone row aligned east–west. It's shapely and imposing, 2.15m (7ft) tall, with eight cupmarks at its base. During ploughing in the 1960s two further stones were found buried, 7.8m (25ft 7in) and 12.5m (41ft) to the east. When the site was excavated in 1971, three further stones in a 9m (30ft) arc were located close to the eastern field boundary, protruding through a layer of large, water-worn stones.

"Local tradition has it that the stones were visited on the first day of May, when a procession was made around them in a deiseil (clockwise) direction." Andy Sweet

CRAIGH NA DUN

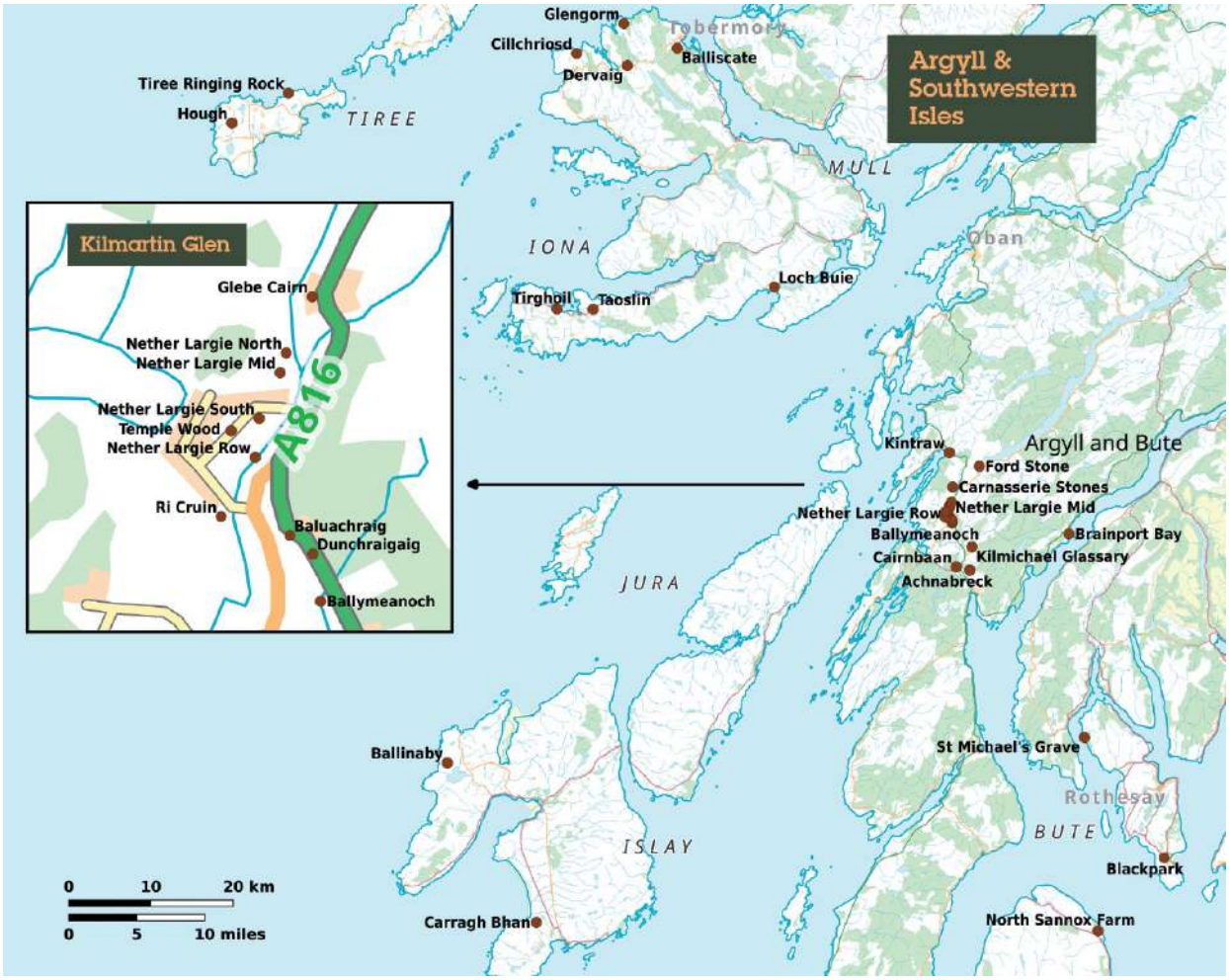
Legendary Stone Circle from *Outlander* | Nearest Village: **Kinloch Rannoch**

Map: **NN 7106 5781** | Sheets: **OL49 L52** | Lat: **56.6942N** | Long: **4.1071W**

A fictional stone circle that features in the *Outlander* books by Diana Gabaldon and the TV series of the same name. “Craigh na Dun” is one of the most searched-for phrases on the Megalithic Portal so there must be many disappointed the circle doesn’t really exist. So here at last is the site of the mythical circle – or at least the filming location from the TV series. There are no stones – these were built for the filming – but it is still a beautiful location overlooking the water. On private land.

West Scotland

Isle of Bute



ST MICHAEL'S GRAVE

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Port Bannatyne**
Map: **NR 9947 7031** | Sheets: **E362 L62** | Lat: **55.8841N** | Long: **5.20779W**

On a terrace close to the Kyles of Bute shoreline, this Clyde cairn is in a very ruinous state, severely reduced by robbing and ploughing. Excavation showed the chamber contained two compartments. The interior is full of rubble, and the

fallen capstone, 2 × 1.4m (6½ft × 4ft 7in), lies to the south. A rough track at the end of the B875 takes you past this and the nearby sites mentioned below.

Nearby | At NR 9971 7057, 349m (1,145ft) ENE of St Michael's Grave, is **Glenvoidean** chambered cairn, its capstone displaced in recent years. At NS 0063 6932, 1.5km (almost 1 mile) ESE of St Michael's Grave, are the mossy and overgrown remains of **Cairn Ban** chambered cairn.

At NS 0074 6826 (sheet L63), 2.4km (1½ miles) southeast of St Michael's Grave, is **Glecknabae** chambered cairn. This badly disturbed Clyde cairn is now a stony, grass-covered mound, about 18 × 9m (59 × 30ft) and about 1.2m (4ft) high, with the end slabs of the central chamber visible. Excavations in 1903 showed that part of the cairn was built over a shell midden. Two small chambers (the eastern chamber is now destroyed) containing fragments of burnt and unburnt bone, along with pot sherds and flint, were found, and there was also a cist. On the fallen stone east of the cairn there appear to be several cupmarks, but these have not been confirmed.

BLACKPARK Alt Name: Kingarth

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Kingarth**
Map: **NS 0916 5567** | Sheets: **E362 L63** | Lat: **55.75661N** | Long: **5.04276W**

Three stones still stand of the seven noted in the late 18th century at this circle in Blackpark plantation. The 2.2m (7ft) southern stone was restored after being damaged in 1974. The second stone, 2.8m (9ft) high, has been cracked by weathering. The third stone, also 2.2m (7ft), is supported by an iron bar, and the top of it is almost circular; it's very unusual and striking.

Nearby | At NS 0846 5536, 760m (almost ½ mile) WSW of Blackpark, is the stone row known as **Stravanan Bay** or Largizean Farm. Three large whinstone boulders stand in a field, with fine views across the bay. Aligned northwest–southeast, the three stand 1.5m (5ft) high, 1.7m (5½ft) high and 1.9m (6ft 2in) high.

At NS 0745 6365, 8.2km (just over 5 miles) NNW of Blackpark, is **Craigberoch** standing stone, an angular stone 2.4m (8ft) high and with several cupmarks visible on its southwest face. It's set close to the ruins of Craigbiorach Farm.

Photo © Anne Tate

Argyll

MAP

BRAINPORT BAY

Megalithic Complex | Nearest Village: **Minard**
Map: **NR 9759 9507** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.10542N** | Long: **5.25635W**

This Argyll site is an interesting and controversial one. There are a number of apparently aligned cupmarked rocks and possible standing stones overlooking Brainport Bay, as well as a group of what have been described as “viewing platforms”, built against a rocky outcrop aligned northeast and southwest, with a central cleft on the same alignment – toward midsummer sunrise. In 1994, two standing stones were vandalized – one broken beyond repair.

ACHNABRECK

Rock Art | Nearest Village: **Cairnbaan**
Map: **NR 8555 9067** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.06067N** | Long: **5.44613W**

Concentrated in Kilmartin Glen is an outstanding collection of prehistoric monuments and some of Britain’s most impressive rock art. The Achnabreck outcrops are where you’ll find the most extensive and complex group of cup-and-ring carvings in Scotland. There are three outcrops in the forestry land, with signposted access. Motifs include cups, cup-and-rings, ringed stars, grooves and spirals; some of the cups surrounded by up to 12 rings. One carving, a cup with seven rings, measures more than 1m (3ft 3in) in diameter – it’s the largest in the country. Look for motifs overlying others and the range of different styles, indicating carving over a long period.

Nearby | At NR 8556 9081, 144m (472ft) north of Achnabreck, is **Achnabreck Forest**, also known as Cnoc na Moine, a panel discovered in 2008 after a storm brought down a tree. The **Achnabreck Eastern** panel is at NR 8572 9064, 173m (567ft) east of Achnabreck. Standing stones are at NR 8554 9018, 490m (1,607ft) south of Achnabreck, and at NR 8563 8992, 754m (½ mile) SSE of the main site.

MAP

CAIRNBAAN

Rock Art | Nearest Village: **Cairnbaan**
Map: **NR 8388 9106** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.06338N** | Long: **5.47326W**

There are two groups of rock art at Cairnbaan, just 1.6km (1 mile) from Achnabreck and signposted from the Cairnbaan Hotel. It can be very wet up here, so wear your boots! Cairnbaan 2 (at NR 8388 9106) has some complex and very fine conjoined multiple ringed cups, including a ring linked to a cup by a series of rays. Cairnbaan 1, the second group, is at NR 8399 9103, 114m (374ft) east of Cairnbaan 2, with two panels of decorated outcrops, enclosed by railings. The southern panel is decorated with cupmarks, cups with single and double

rings, and a keyhole motif. The carvings of the more weathered northern panel are harder to see.

KILMICHAEL GLASSARY

Rock Art | Nearest Village: **Kilmichael Glassary**
Map: **NR 8580 9350** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.08612N** | Long: **5.44443W**

Tucked unexpectedly behind modern housing, not far from the road, is the Kilmichael Glassary 1 outcrop, partially protected by an iron fence and covered with over 120 cupmarks and cup-andrings. These include four cups with unusual keyhole-like rings. Some 60m (197ft) northeast of this stone is the Kilmartin Glassary 2 outcrop, partially buried under tree roots, with numerous single cups as well as three cups with two rings, one cup with four rings and another with five rings. You can explore Hamish Fenton's 3D models of these rock art outcrops by following the links from the Megalithic Portal page for Kilmichael Glassary.

Nearby | At NR 8471 9291, 1.2km (¾ mile) WSW of Kilmichael Glassary, are the three stones of **Dunamuck North**. Only one still stands, the southernmost stone having fallen at some point since 2008. They are very close to the River Add and the walk across the fields from Kilmartin Glassary can be wet. At NR 8483 9248, 447m (1,466ft) SSW of Dunamuck North, are the two further standing stones of **Dunamuck South**. The third set of stones in this group, **Leacaichluaine**, can be found at NR 8483 9232, 160m (525ft) south of Dunamuck South; both these stones are now fallen, but easily spotted.

At NR 8387 9361, 1.9km (just over 1 mile) west of Kilmichael Glassary and close to the river near Dunadd hill fort, is the **Dunadd** standing stone, a squarish, 1.4m (4ft 7in) tall stone, one edge of which seems to have been broken off.

BALLYMEANOCH

Stone Rows & Cairn | Nearest Village: **Kilmartin**
Map: **NR 8337 9642** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.11123N** | Long: **5.48569W**

A very fine site near Kilmartin, with two more or less parallel rows of standing stones, aligned northwest–southeast, and an attractive kerb cairn. You can see

the rows from the road very clearly and access is easy. There are six stones, four in one row and two in the other – these two lean quite dramatically in opposite directions. The tallest stone is 4.1m (13ft 5in) in height. The two middle stones of the four-stone line have multiple cup and cup-and-ring marks (over 70 on stone B). A seventh stone, pierced and cupmarked, has fallen since 1881, and now lies by the kerb cairn at NR 8339 9643, just 30m (98ft) ENE of the stone rows. Although the cairn is damaged, 11 graded stones create an impressive ring of upright slabs.

Photo © Sandy Gerrard

DUNCHRAIGAIG

Cairn | Nearest Village: **Kilmartin**
Map: **NR 8331 9681** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.11473N** | Long: **5.48706W**

A badly robbed but still impressive cairn formed from water-worn stones, now around 30m (98ft) in diameter and 2.5m (8ft) high in the centre, with several cists. Dunchraigaig is not considered part of the Kilmartin linear group of cairns as it is off-line, away to the southeast. Excavated in 1864, one cist, probably the primary burial, contained deposits of burnt bone, perhaps the remains of eight–10 people. A second cist, found in what is now the centre of the cairn (most of its south side having been removed) contained a food vessel and burnt bone. Beneath it, under a paved floor, was a crouched burial, and apparently the lid or roof of this cist had an extended burial on it. The third cist, no longer visible, to the east, also contained a food vessel. Various finds, including a greenstone axe, are sadly lost. On the northern side of the cairn are several earthfast boulders that may be the remains of a cairn.

BALUACHRAIG

Rock Art | Nearest Village: **Kilmartin**
Map: **NR 8312 9696** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.11601N** | Long: **5.49022W**

A very fine selection of rock art on three outcrops within a protective enclosure, close to the road and therefore easy to find. The largest and most profusely decorated panel has around 15 single-ringed cupmarks, 17 cups with double rings and at least 127 plain cupmarks. The second rock has 10 plain cupmarks; the third, two cups, one with a single ring. From here you can see Dunchraigaig cairn (see above).

MAP

GLEBE CAIRN

Cairn | Nearest Village: **Kilmartin**
Map: **NR 8330 9894** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.13379N** | Long: **5.48886W**

From Kilmartin village, an alignment of cairns – a linear cemetery – cuts SSW

across the landscape for 5km (3 miles). The northernmost of these, Glebe Cairn, is enormous and very impressive as you walk past, but you can't get inside it. Now 30m (98ft) across and 3m (10ft) high, it was originally at least 4m (13ft) in height. It was excavated in 1864, when a boulder cist containing an inhumation and a tripartite food vessel was found. A second cist to the southwest contained an Irish food vessel and a wonderful necklace made of 28 jet beads. The placement of the cists indicated two separate periods of construction and use. One food vessel is at the National Museum of Scotland, the other in the British Museum; the necklace, sadly, was lost in a fire at Poltalloch House.

Excavations prior to gravel extraction on the plateau nearby, at Upper Largie, resulted in the discovery of two graves. The earlier of these contained three very early Beaker pots, similar to those from the lower Rhine. Other sites identified on the plateau included a Neolithic cursus and a timber circle, 46m (150ft) in diameter.

Nearby | When visiting the rock art, linear cemetery and associated sites at Kilmartin, you'll probably park at the award-winning **Kilmartin House Museum**, which is well worth a visit. It explores the archaeology of the Kilmartin landscape in detail and holds a large collection of prehistoric artefacts, many from the valley itself.

NETHER LARGIE

Cairn | Nearest Village: **Kilmartin**
Map: **NR 8309 9847** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.12953N** | Long: **5.49194W**

NETHER LARGIE NORTH

Another large cairn in the Kilmartin alignment, Nether Largie North was excavated in 1930, when the whole cairn was taken apart, and has since been entirely reconstructed. The finds included two upright slabs, one of which was carved with two pecked circles (now in the National Museum of Scotland). The cairn now stands almost 2.7m (9ft) high and measures 20m (66ft) in diameter. Visitors can climb down a ladder from the roof hatch into the central chamber to see the large central cist and the underside of the impressive capstone, which is carved with around 40 cupmarks and the outlines of 10 axeheads.

NETHER LARGIE MID

This Bronze Age cairn has been dated to *c.* 2000BC. Before the 1920s, it was around 3m (10ft) tall and 32m (105ft) in diameter. Since then, much of the stone has been robbed for building and road repairs, and it now stands less than 1m (3ft 3in) tall. The two cists this cairn was built to contain are visible: the northernmost is marked by low concrete posts; the other is at the southern edge of the cairn and still has its capstone (although this has been moved so visitors can see inside), together with two of its end slabs. The northwestern slab has at least one cupmark and the faint pecked motif of a bronze axehead. At the southern edge of the cairn, the remains of the kerb can be seen, and within this is another slab bearing five cupmarks.

Photo © Cezary Namirski

Photo © Heartland Arts

NETHER LARGIE SOUTH

This chambered cairn of the Clyde type is the earliest of the burial sites in Kilmartin's linear cemetery, dating from around 3000BC. The cairn was reconstructed 1,000 years later in the Bronze Age when cists were added to the original structure. Its chamber, now in the centre of the cairn, was divided by stone slabs (in a way that resembles structures on Orkney) to hold selected or curated bones after excarnation, rather than individual burials. In the 19th century, the cairn had reached a diameter of 40m (134ft) but most of it had been removed by 1864, when the tomb was excavated; most of what remains has been heaped up around the chamber. The chamber, entered between the two portal stones, is about 6m (20ft) long and 1.8m (6ft) wide at the north, tapering to 1m (3ft 3in) at the southern end. One cist of the two inserted into the cairn after its construction is still visible.

MAP

RI CRUIN

Cairn | Nearest Village: **Kilmartin**
Map: **NR 8255 9712** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.11714N** | Long: **5.49949W**

Southernmost of the burial sites in the Kilmartin linear cemetery, this reconstructed kerbed round cairn is now about 20m (66ft) in diameter. Originally it had three cists, including one with carved axeheads decorating the inside of the slab at the western end, which can still be seen. When the cairn was excavated in 1870, bone fragments were found in all three cists, all of which had grooved side slabs to make them fit neatly together. A further carved slab, featuring a rake-like motif – or perhaps a halberd or even a boat – was destroyed in the fire at Poltalloch House, but fortunately a cast is kept at the National Museum of Scotland.

TEMPLE WOOD Alt Name: **Moon Wood**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Kilmartin**
Map: **NR 8263 9783** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.12356N** | Long: **5.49874W**

Radiocarbon-dating has indicated that the two stone circles at this Kilmartin site are among the earliest examples of stone circles in Scotland and maybe in Britain. Temple Wood South is a multiphase monument with a number of unusual elements. This embanked circle has an oval ring of 13 standing stones (there were 22 originally), about 12m (39ft) in diameter, set within a cairn-like covering of water-rolled pebbles.
A central cist is, in turn, surrounded by another circle of much smaller stones. Two of the standing stones have rock art; one with very faint concentric circles, the other with a spiral carving that is unusual as one half of the spiral is on one face, the other on the next.

Temple Wood North is some 38m (124ft) from the southern circle. It was only discovered in 1979 and has been reconstructed with concrete markers to illustrate the two main phases of construction. Beginning life as a timber setting, the upright timbers were eventually replaced by an elliptical 10.5m (34ft) setting of five stones with another at its centre. Excavation has revealed that the stone

circle was dismantled in prehistoric times, finally being covered with a layer of cobbling.

Photo © Cornfield

NETHER LARGIE ROW

Stone Row | Nearest Village: **Kilmartin**
Map: **NR 8283 9761** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.12168N** | Long: **5.49535W**

A complex and intriguing stone setting to the west of Kilmartin Burn, close to the Temple Wood circles. A pair of standing stones form the northeast end of the alignment; the western stone of these has three, possibly four, cupmarks. Another pair form the southwest end of the alignment; the eastern stone has five cupmarks. In between the two pairs are two groups of standing stones: one of four and another of five. The northerly group of five stones has a central stone, surrounded originally by four other stones that formed a rectangle around its

base; today only three of these “flankers” remain. This central stone has 40 cups and a cup-and-ring motif. The southerly group of four stones are made up of broken upright stones. In 1973, another fallen stone was discovered to the west of the alignment.

Nearby | At NR 8279 9772, 127m (417ft) northwest of the main stone alignment and forming part of it, is **Nether Largie** standing stone. Originally recorded as 1.8m (6ft) high, it now stands 1.5m (5ft) tall on a slight mound, perhaps formed by ploughing around the stone over the years.

CARNASSERIE STONES

Standing Stones | Nearest Village: **Kilmartin**
Map: **NM 8345 0077** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.15029N** | Long: **5.48798W**

A splendid pair of 2.6m (8½ft) playing-card stones, the southernmost with a cupmark near its base. Access to these and the Carnasserie rock art is on foot from the Carnasserie Castle car park.

Nearby | At NM 8389 0086 and 9m (30ft) west of the northwestern angle of the castle, is a rock art boulder decorated with deep, large cupmarks. At NM 8222 0267, 2.3km (just under 1½ miles) northwest of the Carnasserie stones, is the magnificent **Ormaig** rock art panel with 200 carvings, many in extremely good condition as they were only uncovered in 1974. There are three main panels including some amazing rosette motifs on the eastern rock. Please treat them with great care.

THE FORD STONE

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Ford**
Map: **NM 8668 0332** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.17459N** | Long: **5.43811W**

Only one stone (3m/10ft high) remains of what was originally a pair, said to mark the site of an ancient grave. The second stone apparently now lies in the garden of Auchinellan House (now a holiday cottage) at NM 8653 0268, some 670m (under ½ mile) to the south.

Nearby | At NM 8689 0356, 320m (1,050ft) northeast of the Ford Stone, at the village crossroads and close to the River Ford, is the **Ford cist**, set into the

western side of a natural gravel knoll. While it measures just 0.85 × 0.65m (2ft 9in × 2ft), it has an impressive capstone and both end slabs survive. Have a look for some other stones nearby, all close to the road: at NM 8595 0156, 1.9km (just over 1 mile) SSW of the Ford Stone, is **Creagantairbh Beag** with its broken stump (it was blown down in the 1879 Tay Bridge Gale); at NM 8573 0112, 2.4km (1½ miles) southwest of the Ford Stone, is the **Glennan** stone; at NM 8790 0488, 2km (1¼ miles) northeast of the Ford Stone, is the **Torran Cross** incised stone.

KINTRAW Alt Name: Danish King's Grave

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Ardfern**

Map: **NM 8305 0497** | Sheets: **E358 L55** | Lat: **56.18778N** | Long: **5.49783W**

This impressively tall stone, marking what is traditionally said to be the grave of a Danish king, stands 4m (13ft) high beside the road and close to four cairns making up a Bronze Age complex. According to a 17th-century drawing by Edward Lhuyd, this is the remaining stone of a four-stone alignment; it was re-erected after falling in 1979. The site looks toward Jura, with very fine views (when it's not raining). Alexander Thom drew attention to an alignment with the saddle of land between Beinn Shiantaidh and Beinn a'Chaolais in Jura and the midwinter sunset. Debate about this continues, although evidence for the alignment includes alternative, higher observation points on the hill. Further stone alignments at this site are said to indicate Dubh Bheinn, where the moon sets at its minor standstill.

Photo © Roger Heath

Isle of Islay

MAP

CARRAGH BHAN

Standing Stone | Nearest Town: **Port Ellen**
Map: **NR 3283 4781** | Sheets: **E352 L60** | Lat: **55.65013N** | Long: **6.24835W**

A large, square stone on the Isle of Islay, about 2.2m (7ft) tall and leaning slightly, with views north to the Paps of Jura. It's traditionally said to mark the grave of the Manx king Godred Crovan (d. 1095).

Nearby | At NR 3292 4519, 2.6km (just over 1½ miles) south of Carragh Bhan, is **Cragabus** chambered cairn, a very ruinous example of the Clyde group, with no sign of any cairn. Some of the façade survives, and the standing stone to the east is probably a portal stone, suggesting the chamber was originally some 5m (16ft) long, with at least three compartments. Thomas Hastie Bryce's excavation in 1901 produced human bones "in much disorder, though mostly grouped in the corners, and by the sides of the cists." It's very difficult to find a good place to park here, so be careful.

BALLINABY

Stone Row | Nearest Village: **Ballinaby**
Map: **NR 2199 6720** | Sheets: **E353 L60** | Lat: **55.81781N** | Long: **6.43964W**

In the 18th century there were three stones here; now there are only two, one standing, and one broken. The remaining upright is a magnificent slab, almost 5m (16ft) tall, about 1m (3ft 3in) wide and just 0.3m (1ft) thick. About 200m (656ft) to the northeast is another stone, 2m (6½ft) tall, originally much taller and probably deliberately broken.

Photo © Sandy Gerrard

Nearby | At NR 2483 5761, 10km (6¼ miles) SSE of Ballinaby, is the chambered Clyde cairn **Port Charlotte**, badly damaged by stone robbing and excavation. Excavation in 1976 demonstrated that the façade was to the NNE, and the chamber had four compartments. Human bones were found in the second compartment; flint knives, arrowheads and Neolithic pottery sherds were also found at the site.

Isle of Mull

MAP

BALLISCATE Alt Names: **Tobermory, Sgriob-Ruadh**
Stone Row | Nearest Town: **Tobermory**
Map: **NM 4996 5413** | Sheets: **E374 L47** | Lat: **56.61212N** | Long: **6.07658W**

Above Tobermory, with fantastic views over the Sound of Mull, is this three-stone basalt row aligned north–south. The northern stone is 1.7m (5½ft) tall, the central stone, which has fallen, is about 2.8m (9ft) long, and the more irregular southern stone is 2.6m (8½ft) tall. Excavation revealed the stump of a fourth stone, aligned to the north of the others.

Photo © Fiona Robertson

GLENGORM

Stone Row | Nearest Town: **Tobermory**
Map: **NM 4347 5713** | Sheets: **E374 L47** | Lat: **56.63549N** | Long: **6.18501W**

"A magnificent site. The kerb around the stones may have been added when the stones were re-erected." Nick Brand

West of Glengorm Castle, the three standing stones of this row have a dramatic setting on top of a prominent knoll in low-lying land. Two had fallen by the early 1800s, but both had been re-erected by 1942. The enclosure bank surrounding them is not prehistoric. The stones range from 2.05m (6ft 8in) to 2.15m (7ft) in height. The northern stone was re-erected close to its original position; the one to the south has been moved to the northeast in order to take advantage of a cleft in the bedrock. Glengorm is one of the sites that helped Gail Higginbottom develop a landscape model demonstrating the role of astronomical alignments and the horizon in the siting of freestanding stone monuments in Scotland (see page 307).

Photo © Christopher Bickerton

Nearby | At NM 4134 5524, 2.8km (1¾ miles) WSW of Glengorm, is **Quinish** stone row. Alexander Thom suggested the four stones were aligned toward moonrise at the major southern lunar standstill. Only one stone remains standing.

DERVAIG Alt Names: **Dervaig B, Cnoc Fada**

Stone Row | Nearest Village: **Dervaig**
Map: **NM 4390 5203** | Sheets: **E374 L47** | Lat: **56.59003N** | Long: **6.17297W**

On the hillside above Dervaig, the fivestone row of basalt blocks known as Dervaig Centre now has only two stones standing but is still impressive, all the stones about 2.5m (8ft) tall (or long) and aligned NNW–SSE. The surrounding plantation has now been harvested, dramatically changing the setting from dark and damp to open, with views of the surrounding hills.

Photo © Sandy Gerrard

Nearby | At NM 4393 5189, 143m (469ft) SSE of Dervaig Centre, is **Dervaig D**, a possible stone row (but perhaps just natural boulders) built into a wall.

At NM 4386 5162, 411m (1,348ft) south of Dervaig Centre, **Dervaig SSE**, also known as Dervaig C or Glac Mhor, is another stone row, rather badly treated. Three stones are aligned more or less NNW–SSE: one is a gatepost, one is set in the dyke and one is broken. The tallest reaches 1.7m (5½ft).

NM 4360 5305, about 1km (0.6 miles) NNW of Dervaig Centre, **Maol Mor**, also known as Dervaig A, Kilmore or Frachadil, is also a stone row, some 10m (33ft) long, with four neat stones aligned NNW–SSE, set in a forestry plantation. Three are upright, around 2.2m (7ft) high. The fourth, fallen stone, is 2.5m (8ft) long.

CILLCHRIOSD

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Dervaig**
Map: **NM 3772 5350** | Sheets: **E374 L47** | Lat: **56.59981N** | Long: **6.27473W**

A fine 2.6m (8½ft) high stone, with a level top and vertical sides. Gail

Higginbottom (see page 307) proposes that Cillchriosd is aligned to moonrise at the southerly minor standstill. In the opposite direction, the alignment is within a few degrees of the midsummer sunset.

Photo © Christopher Bickerton

MAP

LOCH BUIE

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Craignure**
Map: **NM 6177 2510** | Sheets: **E375 L49** | Lat: **56.35806N** | Long: **5.85808W**

Remote Loch Buie has a magical setting, with Ben Buie rising dramatically behind and golden eagles flying overhead, but it is, essentially, in a bog, so come prepared (wellies are essential). Originally a circle of nine granite slabs, the position of one missing stone is now marked by a small boulder. The circle is 12m (39ft) in diameter and the stones, the tallest of which is 2m (6½ft), have been set with their flatter faces turned inward. There are three associated outliers, the tallest is some 40m (131ft) southwest of the circle and 3m (10ft) tall. Stone circles are rare in the west of Scotland, making this a significant site.

Nearby | Hidden among trees at NM 6155 2525, 265m (869ft) WNW of Loch Buie circle, is a ruined kerb cairn. You will probably pass by on your way from the parking spot to the stone circle.

At NM 6163 2542, about 365m (1,197ft) northwest of the circle, the Loch Buie standing stone is about 2m (6½ft) tall.

At NM 5463 3002, 8.6km (5¼ miles) WNW of the circle, are the four **Uluvalt** stones, three of which have fallen (one of these may be a natural erratic).

"From the parking spot, follow the white marker stones across extremely boggy pastureland. These peter out in front of a clump of trees. Make your way to the fence and follow it along to the left to find the gate to the stones." Fiona Robertson

TAOSLIN

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Bunessan**
Map: **NM 3973 2239** | Sheets: **E373 L48** | Lat: **56.32216N** | Long: **6.21113W**

Standing by the Fionnphort road, this stone may be prehistoric or a later way-marker for Iona pilgrims. It's about 2m (6½ft) tall, with a slightly sloping top. David Smyth has examined the role of its shadow, and concluded that at equinox it is notably elongated down its east side. He also highlights possible archaeoastronomical features of the stone, including that, from here, the star Arcturus would have appeared to skim the top of the Burg hill to the north.

Archaeoastronomy in Western Scotland

Gail Higginbottom, archaeologist and leader of the Western Scotland Megalithic Landscape Project along with astrophysicist Roger Clay and others from the University of Adelaide

Our project uses innovative 2D graphics and 3D rendering techniques to demonstrate that the builders of Bronze Age standing stone monuments chose locations based on particular horizon shapes, considering distance, direction and relative height in relation to a monument's position. It builds on our statistical reassessment of the work of Clive Ruggles, showing that many more sites than previously thought were deliberately oriented to the sun or moon. Significantly, approximately half the sites we looked at have a particular form of horizon shape surrounding them, higher and closer in the north, and further away and lower in the south – we call these "classic sites". The remaining sites, with horizons higher and closer in the south, we label "reverse sites". The relative heights of the horizons affect where the sun and moon are seen to rise and set, and it would seem the megalith builders tried to ensure that these bodies interact with particular peaks or high ground at specific times in their cycles.

This combination of high and low horizons around the monument created great astronomical shows at different times of the year, including the solstices and the minor and major lunar standstills (extreme rising and setting times of the moon, which occur only every 18.6 years). The most spectacular display occurs when these two events coincide.

It's clear there were many essential natural elements to consider and understand when choosing where to build a megalithic monument. The final element was to include one or more alignments between the stones of the same monument, or separate, intervisible monuments, again to indicate one or more of the extreme rising and setting points of the sun and/or moon.

We show that the visible patterns found at Bronze Age sites on the inner isles and mainland of western Scotland were first established in stone at two of the earliest dated "great circles": Callanish on the Isle of Lewis and Stenness in Orkney. To do this, we developed two new methods to formally test the likelihood of a connection between stone circles and astronomy by cross-correlation, comparing the stone directions

with the direction of astronomical phenomena crossing the horizon. For the first test, the number of random circles at the same locations which hit the same number of targets as Stenness is 27 and nine for Callanish. The likelihood of the number of astronomical "hits" coming from random chance is 1.25 percent and 1.66 percent respectively. For the second test, looking at the likelihood of the monuments being astronomical, with 47 independent samples for each, the results are 97.87 percent for both sites.

The bane of many an archaeoastronomer has been the large number of potential random errors and "background noise", as well as the inherent number of statistical trials needed – the more stones in a circle, the greater the numbers of trials (testing of each alignment), increasing the likelihood that the pattern observed is due to chance. Our tests have been constructed to overcome these factors, and are, I believe, a breakthrough in the quest to discover when and where complex astronomical and landscape patterns were first associated with standing-stone structures in Scotland, and possibly all of Britain. The statistical results for Stenness and Callanish are compelling.

The visual dominance of the first great circles in the north of Britain seems to have led a cultural transformation that connected standing stones to the local landscape and the motion of the sun and moon across that landscape. Soon after these sites were created, more late Neolithic stone monuments were erected – circles, pairs and single standing stones – continuing until the early Bronze Age. By approximately 800BC hundreds of smaller stone circles and settings existed, and these later monuments continued the tradition of connecting with a cosmological landscape ideal that was first set in standing stone more than 2,000 years previously, demonstrating the longevity and relevance of this cosmological system, despite the various radical material and social changes that occurred from the late Neolithic to the late Bronze Age.

Loch Buie and Uluvalt (upper) on Mull are examples of sites with the "classic" landscape around them. These sites are not located next to each other, yet their profiles are very similar (see diagram, below). There are variations in detail but the general factors stay the same. If you go to other locations on the island the mountain chains may not be as extreme in height or you may get one single long, curving range without two distinct peaks. We have statistical evidence that shows that the "classic" sites have horizon shapes that are significantly different from the general lie of the land, which tells us that their occurrence is very unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Higginbottom, G. and Mom, V. "Place: The Physical Embodiment of Collective Information" in J.B. Glover, J.M. Moss and D. Rissolo (eds), *Digital Archaeologies, Material Worlds*. Tübingen: University of Tübingen.

The 3D program Horizon, developed by Andrew G.K. Smith, astrophysicist at the University of Adelaide, can be downloaded from: www.agksmith.net/horizon/

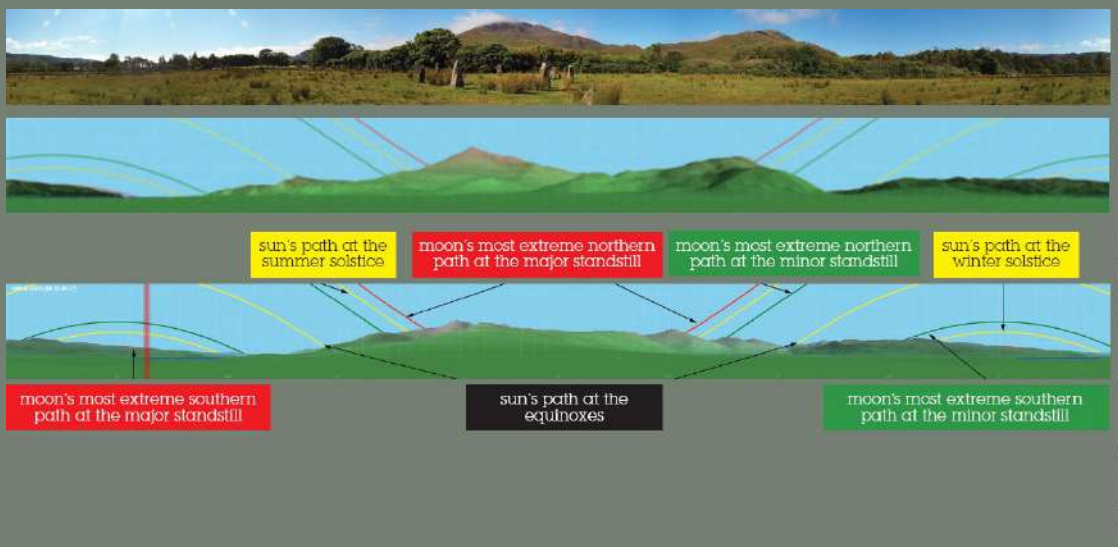

sun's path at the summer solstice
moon's most extreme northern path at the major standstill
moon's most extreme northern path at the minor standstill
sun's path at the winter solstice
moon's most extreme southern path at the major standstill
sun's path at the equinoxes
moon's most extreme southern path at the minor standstill

Photo © Vincent Mom of Digital Preservation Projects (DPP)

Plots taken from 3D renderings of the path of the sun at solstice and equinox, and the moon at the minor and major standstills, over the Loch Buie (top and middle) and Uluvalt (bottom) landscapes

MAP

Isle of Tiree

TIRGHOIL

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Bunessan**
Map: **NM 3532 2242** | Sheets: **E373 L48** | Lat: **56.32N** | Long: **6.28228W**

In a field beside the road to Fionnphort, this 2.6m (8½ft) granite pillar is traditionally held to be another marker for the Iona pilgrim route, although it's just as likely to be prehistoric.

Photo © Christopher Bickerton

Nearby | At NM 3250 2217, 2.8km (1¾ miles) west of Tirghoil, is **Poit na h-I**, a standing stone with a pleasing triangular shape. At NM 3133 2331, 1.6km (1 mile) WNW of Poit na h-I, is the 2.4m (7ft 10in) **Achaban House** standing

stone, which may be prehistoric or another later marker of the route to Iona. Ask for permission at the guest house.

TIREE RINGING ROCK

Alt Names: **Balephetrish Gong Stone, Clach a' Choire**
Glacial Erratic with Cup-marks | Nearest Village: **Balephetrish**
Map: **NM 0268 4869** | Sheets: **E372 L46** | Lat: **56.53584N** | Long: **6.83802W**

This large glacial erratic was carried by the ice from Rum to Tiree, and is a much younger type of rock (granodiorite) than anything native to the island. It's covered in more than 50 cup-marks, perhaps relating to the fact that it "rings" if you tap or bang it with a pebble. It's said that if the rock is moved Tiree will sink beneath the waves.

> **"I was also told if ever Tiree were in trouble, the rock would break open and our ancestors would come out and rescue the island."** Anon

Photo © Andrew Curtis

HOUGH Alt Names: **Tiree 3, Moss B**
Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Hough**
Map: **NL 9581 4504** | Sheets: **E372 L46** | Lat: **56.49878N** | Long: **6.94503W**

There are two circles up here within about 150m (492ft) of each other, about 1km (0.6 miles) southeast of Hough House. The SSW circle (NL 9581 4504) is the larger, 40m (131ft) in diameter, with 11 fallen stones and the stump of a 12th. There may originally have been more stones, but these are now missing.

Hough NNE circle (NL 9589 4515) – also known as Tiree 3 and Moss A – is 136m (446ft) northeast of Hough SSW. This stone circle has 10 stones, one of which is upright and about 1.8m (6ft) tall. Five others are reduced to stumps and the rest are fallen. A low mound in the centre, about 14m (46ft) in diameter, may be a cairn.

Nearby | At NL 9469 4300, 2.3km (1½ miles) southwest of Hough SSW, is **Middleton** standing stone, 1.6m (5ft 3in) high.

At NL 9731 4259, 2.9km (1¾ miles) southeast of Hough SSW, is the

elongated, triangular **Ceasabh** standing stone, 1.9m (6ft 3in) high.

Northeast Scotland

Aberdeenshire

STONE OF MORPHIE

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Hillside**
Map: **NO 7170 6275** | Sheets: **E382 L45** | Lat: **56.75549N** | Long: **2.46443W**

Just off the road, this very impressive 3.4m (11ft) standing stone is said to mark the grave of a son of the Danish general Camus, killed in a battle between the Scots and the Danes. Skeletal remains were indeed found buried underneath it when it was re-erected in the 19th century, having fallen before 1856. It has splendid views of the Angus Hills.

"Although the immediate vicinity consists of mundane farm buildings, the stone stands close by some of the best coastal scenery of northeast Scotland." C. Michael Hogan

ESSLIE THE GREATER Alt Name: Esslie South

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Strachan**
Map: **NO 7172 9159** | Sheets: **E406 L30** | Lat: **57.01457N** | Long: **2.46732W**

At Esslie the Greater, a recumbent stone circle, 22.5m (74ft) across, surrounds a ring cairn. The cairn is badly robbed, but you can see the two rings of kerb stones quite clearly. The recumbent, triangular in shape, is about 2.8m (9ft) long. Originally, there were probably eight or nine stones (as well as the recumbent and flankers) in the circle, with five of these now remaining. Two lines of stones run from the ends of the recumbent to the cairn.

Photo © Richard L. Dixon

Nearby | At NO 7225 9215, some 770m (under ½ mile) ENE from its "Greater" sibling and visible from there, stands **Esslie the Lesser** stone circle. Six stones surround a ring cairn, but the site is often badly overgrown and field clearance confuses matters further.

At NO 7240 9117, just under 1km (0.6 miles) southeast from the Esslies, is **Garrol Wood**, also known as Nine Stanes, a recumbent stone circle with the typical internal ring cairn. This is a wonderfully mossy, lichen-shrouded site, appearing mysterious in its forest setting. Originally eight stones plus the recumbent and flankers, one is now missing and another a mere stump.

Carved Stone Balls

Julie Kearney, who researches the links between consciousness, creativity and natural energies

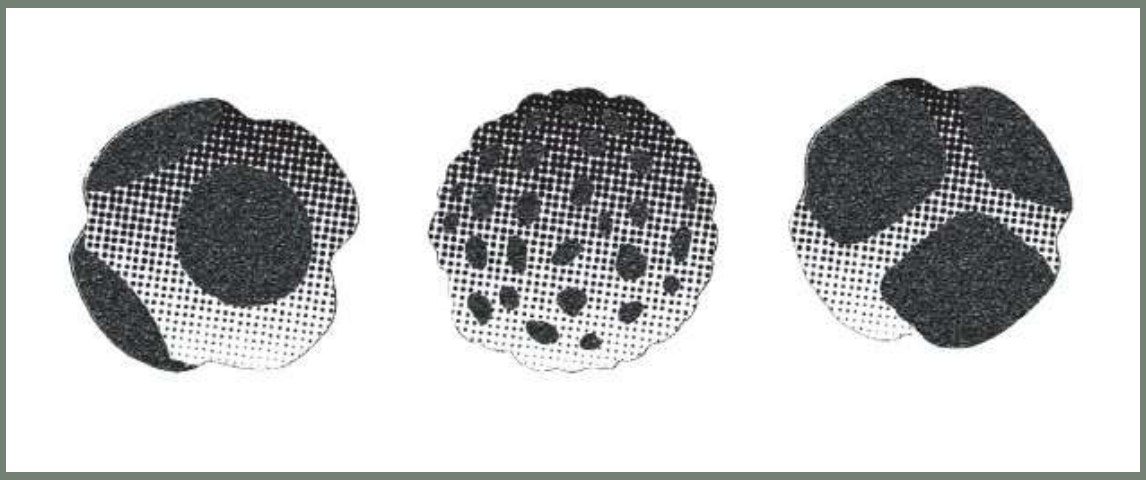
Found mainly in Aberdeenshire, their distribution coinciding with recumbent stone circle sites, carved stone balls (petrospheres) are thought to have been made from the late Neolithic period, around 5,200 years ago. Made of sandstone, greenstone, quartzite and granite, they generally measure around 7cm (2¾in) across – about the size of a tennis ball – and fit comfortably in the hand. Some are beautifully decorated with ornate carvings of spirals and chevrons, others with concentric triangles, hatches and zigzags, and, of over 425 discovered so far, most are adorned with a precise pattern of carved symmetrical knobs. Dorothy N. Marshall's diagrams of the balls, 387 of which are catalogued in Volume 108 of *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (1976), demonstrate that although a few have small indented cups like golf balls, the majority have anywhere from three to 160 knobs, and most have six. Most balls were discovered during agricultural activity and few have been found in an archaeological context – one exception being a rare find in situ at the Ness of Brodgar in 2013.

Theories about the balls' purpose include use as weights for nets, leatherworking tools, currency, weight measures, thrown weapons, ceremonial speaking stones, oracles, game pieces and ball bearings for monument construction. But the central question remains: what would justify the time and effort spent on the precision and, in some cases, intricacy of the carvings? Another theory speculates that the balls may have been a Neolithic stonemason's "portable résumé". The range in skill shown, from master-craftsman level to basic scratching, may support such a theory, but no balls have been found in graves, indicating they may not have been valued as personal artefacts. Another much-debated theory is that the balls represent very early experimentation with solid geometric figures.

The designs and portability of the balls reminded Australian researcher Lynne Kelly of stone "memory devices" used by some indigenous peoples. Use of these is linked with notable places in the landscape and a tradition of following a journey along structured paths

called songlines. They aid in recording knowledge, such as of navigation and astronomy, or of ethical or other guidelines. Kelly believes that the stone balls might be connected to the nearby stone circles as portable memory devices.

The balls can be seen in several museums, including the National Museum of Scotland, the Ashmolean in Oxford, the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, and the British Museum. A recent report indicates that a six-knobbed stone ball, very similar in appearance to the Scottish stone balls, is on display in the National Archaeology Museum in La Paz, Bolivia – part of an exhibition of finds from Lake Titicaca. New connections? The mystery continues …



Neolithic carved stone balls

AUQUHOLLIE Alt Name: **Lang Stane**

Standing Stone | Nearest Town: **Stonehaven**

Map: **NO 8233 9080** | Sheets: **E396 L38** | Lat: **57.008N** | Long: **2.29255W**

A good standing stone, 2.35m (8½ft) tall, with fine views. Now in a little fenced enclosure, it is alleged to have once been part of a circle – however there is no evidence for this. An ogham inscription reads “VUO NO N (I) TEDOV”. The Pictish carvings that were once visible on the northeast side of the stone can no

longer be seen.

AUCHQUHORTHIES

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Portlethen**
Map: **NO 9019 9634** | Sheets: **E406 L38** | Lat: **57.058N** | Long: **2.16336W**

A complex site in an open, pastureland setting, with views across to the sea. It has quite a jumbled appearance on first sight, but the recumbent stone circle and ring cairn are both well preserved. It's thought that in its final form the circle was about 18m (59ft) across, and had at least 18 stones, set on the edge of a platform and encircling a cairn. Fourteen stones remain, two are stumps. There is an unusual forecourt feature in front of the recumbent, framed by two stones. The recumbent itself is 2.7m (9ft) long and nearly 1.4m (4ft 7in) tall. The eastern flanker is missing. The rest of the standing stones might seem irregular, but it's believed that there were in fact two circles, with differently sized stones, eight of the larger type and seven or even nine of the smaller. The ring cairn has a more or less continuous kerb, but has been badly robbed.

Nearby | At NO 9036 9608, in a field just over 300m (984ft) southeast of Auchquhorthies, is the 26m (85ft) diameter **Old Bourtreebush** stone circle. Five stones remain (one fallen), with two other possible candidates for inclusion in the circle in the west and east.

At NO 9064 9750, 1.2km (¾ mile) northeast of Auchquhorthies, is the reconstructed stone circle and cairn of **Cairnwell**. It was moved 175m (574ft) northwest of its original position to make way for an industrial site in 1995 and now stands in a landscaped setting beside a road. Excavation showed a complex sequence of activity, from a semi-circle of pits to the monument as it now appears.

Photo © Matthew Chapman

Recumbent Stone Circles

Adam Welfare, an archaeologist with Historic Environment Scotland

Recumbent stone circles are found only in northeast Scotland, although they share several characteristics with many other stone rings scattered throughout Britain and Ireland. Over 70 are known, and their most distinctive feature is a large, horizontal stone positioned in the southern quadrant of the circle. This recumbent stone is the broadest and bulkiest stone and is invariably carefully levelled, although its summit is not necessarily flat. It may have an asymmetric, boat-like profile (as at Aikey Brae and Kirkton of Bourtie) and appear to be raked slightly backward, while its external face is often striking, adding to its impressiveness. Two tall stones fitting tightly against each end of the recumbent are termed "flankers" and together the three form the recumbent setting. The flankers, which usually tower over the recumbent (Cothiemuir Wood, page 319, is a good example) normally form a contrasting pair, with one being slender, while the other is stout. Many have a pronounced curve to their silhouette (as at Midmar Kirk, see page 316) and, together with the recumbent stone they make an important visual statement, often enhanced by a flattening of the ring's curvature in this sector. The remainder of the ring is usually made up of between six and 10 upright stones or orthostats. Their broader faces are generally turned outward, like those of the recumbent and flankers; and they are positioned in pairs either side of the ring's axis, forming a remarkably regular circle behind the recumbent setting – which can appear skewed by comparison. The uprights are also roughly graded in height from the flankers to the shortest stone, which is typically situated somewhere in the ring's northeast quadrant. Their diameter usually measures between 15m and 25m (49–82ft), but larger and smaller examples are found. If there are cup-marks, they almost always occur on the recumbent setting or the adjacent uprights (as at Sunhoney, page 316).

However, a recumbent stone circle is more than a distinctive ring. The stones' footings are generally embedded within a rubble platform encircling a low, flat-topped, polygonal cairn. The platform is usually well founded, but not much larger than the ring, and its outer perimeter is rarely neatly finished. This contrasts with the cairn, which will generally

be carefully built, despite being constructed directly on subsoil. Where these are ring cairns, tightly packed kerb stones retain an earth and rubble matrix with a small kerbed court at the centre (as at Auchquhorthies, page 313). The outer kerbs are sometimes turned outward to link with the recumbent or flankers, while the kerb stones themselves sometimes crudely mimic the grading of the ring stones. Other cairns appear to lack a central court, while a small group of rings in the extreme northeast are connected with small kerbed stony walls enclosing relatively wide, open courts.

Excavation since the mid-19th century has yielded useful information, but a clear structural sequence was only retrieved from Tomnaverie (see page 317) at the end of the 20th century. A series of dates confirming the origin of these circles in the early Bronze Age was also obtained. The earliest activity was denoted by a small heap of burnt soil, charcoal and pulverized bone: debris from a funeral pyre. This was later enclosed within a low cairn bonded with the platform, at the edge of which the recumbent stone circle was later erected – necessitating the reconfiguration of the cairn behind the recumbent setting so that the kerb linked with the flankers.

The location of the recumbent setting provides the ring with a distinct orientation, although whether the target lies in the sky or the landscape has proved contentious. Until recently, the range of azimuths (an azimuth being the angle between a celestial body and the north, measured clockwise around the observer's horizon) appeared to favour the moon as the focus. This was thought to be supported by the common incidence of cup-marks and milky white quartz in the rings. This mineral, like the orientation and the colours of the stones themselves, was clearly intended to convey meaning, but other aspects of the architecture are also intensely symbolic and every element must contribute to a consistent explanation. The Victorians believed the recumbent setting could be read as a closed doorway, locking ghosts into the circle; but since then it has been slowly comprehended that much of the design appears to have its origin in the architecture of Neolithic chambered tombs. Another level of symbolism construes quartz as referencing the sun, which in radiating warmth and light is synonymous with fire – the means by which the dead who were brought to these places were transmuted into another dimension. Thus, the orientations should be interpreted as generalized solar alignments, which in conjunction with the contrast between the location of the recumbent setting and the smallest upright in the ring, places the emphasis on the

winter solstice: the point where the old year dies and the new begins; while the overall symbolism, expressed in the circularity of these monuments, alludes to the cycle of life.

MAP

CRAIGHEAD BADENTOY

Stone Circle | Nearest Town: **Portlethen**
Map: **NO 9118 9772** | Sheets: **E406 L38** | Lat: **57.07042N** | Long: **2.14709W**

An unusual site in an industrial setting of huge containers, this reconstructed circle resembles a four-poster, although it seems to have had seven stones originally. All four remaining stones have metal rings attached to their lower faces (once used to tether a flagstaff) and it seems unlikely that any are in their original positions, except possibly the southernmost. The northeastern one has been split using a drill, the marks still clearly visible.

CULLERLIE

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Echt**
Map: **NJ 7851 0428** | Sheets: **E406 L38** | Lat: **57.12889N** | Long: **2.35659W**

Considered by some to be overly manicured, Cullerlie is nevertheless an interesting and unusual site, with a ring of eight large, boulder-like stones that surrounds eight small burial cairns. In the early 19th century there were apparently a number of similar circles to the southwest but no trace of these remains. The site is later than the recumbent circles of the area.

SUNHONEY

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Echt**
Map: **NJ 7159 0569** | Sheets: **E406 L38** | Lat: **57.14122N** | Long: **2.47107W**

A lovely if sometimes overgrown recumbent circle, the delightfully named Sunhoney (named after the farm on whose land it stands) is 27m (87ft) in diameter and has 11 red granite or gneiss standing stones along with a large grey granite recumbent, which, although it has slipped (or been moved) and broken, is still impressive at 5.3m (17ft 4in) long. It has more than 30 cup-marks, although some are hard to see. There's a raised platform, 7m (23ft) across and 0.3m (1ft) high, within the circle, probably the remains of a cairn, and cremation deposits were found when the circle was excavated in 1865.

Nearby | At NJ 7260 0712, some 1.7km (just over 1 mile) northeast of Sunhoney, **Barmekin of Echt** is a multi-vallate hill fort with an unusually large

number of entrances and five concentric ramparts. It is probably a multiphase monument, as at least one entrance is blocked by a subsequent wall. A 3.3kg (7lb 4oz) Neolithic stone axe made from local chlorite schist was found here in Victorian times and is now in the National Museum of Scotland. It's so big it's thought that it must have been used for cutting down trees.

MIDMAR KIRK

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Echt**
Map: **NJ 6994 0649** | Sheets: **E406 L38** | Lat: **57.1483N** | Long: **2.49843W**

Unusually located among gravestones in the churchyard of Midmar Kirk, this recumbent circle of eight stones is 17m (55ft) across. It's thought that there were originally 10 or 11 stones in total. The curved flanking stones, both about 2.5m (8ft) tall, are very striking, resembling horns or teeth. It's a curious place and all the more pleasing for that. The recumbent is massive, 4.5m (14ft) long and up to 1.2m (4ft) wide, and weighing 18 tonnes (20 tons). Five standing stones survive, as well as the two flankers and the recumbent. The remains of a cairn are evident in the southern side of the circle; the cairn could have been cleared away when the graveyard was laid out in 1914.

Photo © Michael Lindowsky

Nearby | At NJ 6987 0659, just 122m (400ft) or so north of the church, **Midmar Kirk N**, also known as the Balbair Stone, is a fine, slender standing stone in a woodland setting.

MAP

GLASSEL

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Torphins**
Map: **NO 6490 9969** | Sheets: **E406 L37** | Lat: **57.08686N** | Long: **2.58076W**

Oddly hard to find if you're not paying attention, Glassel stone circle is in a clearing in woodland, delightful in dappled sunlight. It comprises five standing stones of reddish granite, none of them very tall (1m/3ft 3in is the highest), in a sub-oval setting. The circle is thought to represent a transitional type between recumbent circles and four-posters.

"The forest track to the stones was hard going. Coming back, I followed the river to the road – much easier." Christopher Bickerton

TOMNAVERIE

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Tarland**
Map: **NJ 4865 0348** | Sheets: **OL59 L37** | Lat: **57.11937N** | Long: **2.84963W**

Photo © Sandy Gerrard

In a setting that feels rather precarious, almost undercut by a disused quarry, this is a fine recumbent circle. As it is not hemmed in by commercial forestry, the views are wonderful. The 17m (56ft) ring was reconstructed following Richard Bradley's excavations in the late 1990s. There are now 11 stones standing (most of pale red granite), of an original 13, with a 3.2m (10ft 5in) recumbent of grey granite that has two cup-marks. The remains of a central ring cairn can also be seen. The excavation revealed the circle was built on an earlier levelled platform and burial cairn – under the recumbent stone a pit containing charcoal was found, which has been radiocarbon-dated to 2500BC. The apparently organized nature of construction led Bradley to suggest that the entire sequence of building from platform and cairn to final circle was conceived from the outset.

Skyscape Archaeology at Tomnaverie

Liz Henty, Co-editor of the *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology*

Skyscape archaeology is an interdisciplinary way of studying material remains, adopting a phenomenological approach to marry archaeoastronomical research with the known archaeology. This method was applied to recent research into Tomnaverie recumbent stone circle (Henty 2014) to examine the movements of the sun, moon and stars during the year 2580BCBC, which is the date judged to be the earliest one possible for the construction of the central ring mound (Bradley 2005). When seen from a northeast position outside the circle, below stones 8 and 9, the recumbent arrangement at the southwest appears to form a window to the sky through which an observer can view celestial movements.

In the winter months, between October and February, the setting sun can be observed through this window, with the setting points travelling toward the solstice position and back again. The high full moon would have traversed the recumbent in the winter, but there was apparently no interest in the standstill moon at Tomnaverie. On the night of the winter solstice many bright stars would have set within an hour of each other: the red stars Aldebaran and Betelgeuse to the west of the window, and the bright white Sirius slightly to the south. The stars of Orion's Belt would have appeared to set almost horizontally on top of the recumbent stone. This pastiche of red and white stars corresponds to the red and white (weathered pale grey) stones of the circle. With small variation this cyclical pattern of setting stars would have been visible through the winter months, not just during the year 2580BC but annually, in a spectacular display that was worth staying up for.

In summer the sun sets late in northern Scotland and the sky does not get completely dark, so the long winter nights are more favourable for making celestial observations. Researchers disagree on the nature of the alignments at recumbent stone circles and whether the moon was a specific focus, but considering the repeating solar, lunar and stellar alignments in the winter months it seems likely that circles were built to relate to the winter sky. The sepulchral function of the Tomnaverie circle with its earlier funeral pyres could have been associated with the setting

of the sun in the winter, which metaphorically symbolizes death before the spring renewal. It follows that the recumbent arrangement monumentally enshrined the particular configurations of the celestial movements sacred to the builders, creating a holistic cosmology to account for death.

Bradley, R., 2005. *The Moon and the Bonfire: An Investigation of Three Stone Circles in Aberdeenshire*. Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

Henty, Liz, 2014. "The Archaeoastronomy of Tomnaverie Recumbent Stone Circle: A Comparison of Methodologies". *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, Vol. 24, 2014, pp.45–59.

Find out more about skyscape archaeology at: journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/JSA

CASTLE FRASER Alt Names: **Balgorkar, West Main**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Kemnay**
Map: **NJ 7150 1253** | Sheets: **E406/421 L38** | Lat: **57.20265N** | Long: **2.47334W**

A fine recumbent stone circle, noted by Aubrey Burl as one of the best examples of its type. It's said there were originally 11 stones here in a 21m (69ft) ring, but one is missing, while others have fallen. One of the stones was knocked over and broken in two in 2002. The recumbent and flankers are really splendid, the 2.25m (7ft 4in) recumbent sitting neatly between flankers that rise to 2.45m (8ft) and 2.7m (8ft 10in) high. The remains of a plough-damaged ring cairn, with a few kerb stones protruding from the mound, can be seen within the circle.

Nearby | At NJ 7174 1252, in the same field as the stone circle, 239m (784ft) to the east, are two standing stones or a stone row. The northeast stone is about 2m (6½ft) in height, the southwest about 1.8m (6ft).

At NJ 7105 1344, just 1km (0.6 miles) northwest of Castle Fraser stone circle, **Woodend of Cluny** or Ton Burn is an extremely impressive 3.3m (11ft) standing stone, covered in lichen and set in a broadleaf plantation.

COTHIEMUIR WOOD Alt Name: **Devil's Hoofmarks**

Stone Circle | Nearest Town: **Alford**
Map: **NJ 6171 1980** | Sheets: **E421 L38** | Lat: **57.26724N** | Long: **2.63649W**

A really lovely location in a woodland clearing. There was some controversy about the area nearby being chosen for a natural burial ground, but it does not impinge on the site. Although the circle is badly damaged it is impressive, with a very large recumbent, 4.3m (14ft) long, and towering 2.7m (9ft) flankers. In 1842 there were still 12 stones but this total is now reduced to eight, with seven still standing. The monument began life as a low cairn, open in the middle, possibly containing a cist. The sockets of two standing stones cut through the cairn, showing that the stone circle was a later addition. The alternative name Devil's Hoofmarks comes from the natural indentations on the recumbent; there are a couple of possible cup-marks as well.

Nearby | At NJ 5965 1939, 2.1km (1¼ miles) west of Cothiemuir Wood, is the wonderful **Old Keig** stone circle. It may be badly damaged, but it still retains much of its power, perhaps due to its enormous recumbent: at 5m (16ft 7in) long, 2m (6½ft) thick and 2.1m (6ft 10in) high, and weighing an estimated 48 tonnes (53 tons), it's the largest and heaviest there is – and it probably travelled 10km (6¼ miles) to get here. The flankers are impressive, too, reaching nearly 3m (9½ft) in height. This stone has real presence – and fine views. A robbed-out cairn stands within the circle.

At NJ 5527 2794, around 10km (6 miles) northwest of Cothiemuir Wood, is **Ardlair** recumbent stone circle (see photo, page 8), situated in a very impressive location surrounded by hills.

"Still imposing despite most of the east side being destroyed. Like Old Keig, just over 2km (1¼ miles) to the west, this has an excellent recumbent and flankers." Ewen Rennie

EASTER AQUHORTHIES

Stone Circle | Nearest Town: **Inverurie**
Map: **NJ 7323 2079** | Sheets **E421 L38** | Lat: **57.27695N** | Long: **2.4456W**

An attractive recumbent stone circle, well-kept and neat and, unusually, with all its stones still in place, surrounded by a stone-walled enclosure in a farmland setting. There are 11 stones in the circle plus the recumbent itself, which has three further stones set almost at right angles to it. The standing stones are all red jasper, except the grey granite flanking stones either side of the recumbent.

These flankers are the tallest: 2.2–2.4m (7–8ft). The recumbent is 3.8m (12ft 5in) long. The interior may contain a ring cairn and cist, apparently undisturbed.

MAP

TYREBAGGER Alt Name:

Dyce Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Dyce**
Map: **NJ 8595 1322** | Sheets: **E406/421 L38** | Lat: **57.20952N** | Long: **2.23422W**

A wonderful recumbent circle, with a great atmosphere despite the adjacent radio mast and views over Dyce Airport (although a planned bypass will make it noisier in future). Some 18.5m (61ft) in diameter, the circle has stones that are set in a low stony bank that surrounds the remains of a ring cairn. The dark grey granite recumbent is 3.4m (11ft) long, 2.4m (8ft) high, and weighs 21 tonnes (23 tons), while the 10 circle stones, which are from 1.3m (4ft 3in) to 3.2m (10ft 7in) tall, are made of a gritty red granite.

“To describe Tyrebagger as a beautiful place would be like saying water is wet. I simply don’t have the words. I suggest you see for yourself.” Sheila Caldwell

Photo © Les Hamilton

BROOMEND OF CRICHIE

Megalithic Complex | Nearest Village: **Port Elphinstone**
Map: **NJ 7791 1968** | Sheets: **E421 L38** | Lat: **57.26723N** | Long: **2.36789W**

Close to the main road, an industrial complex and a housing estate, this is a curious site and a melancholy survival of what was an important late Neolithic ceremonial complex. Once there was a six-stone circle inside a small henge, 33.5m (110ft) in diameter, and a 400m (1,312ft) avenue, containing an estimated 72 stones in two rows, that lead south to the river and north to a setting of three concentric circles, 50m (164ft) north of the henge. The stones of the henge circle and avenue were dynamited in the 19th century, leaving just two original stones within the henge, and only three or four stones remaining in the avenue, including one just south of the henge. The three concentric stone circles were also destroyed. The third stone now standing in the henge is a Pictish carved stone that was moved here when the Aberdeen–Inverness railway line was built. It may be a reused prehistoric standing stone, but the fine carvings date to around 600AD.

Photo © Golux

Nearby | At NJ 7787 1917 and NJ 7783 1922, in woodland some 500m (1,640ft) south of the henge, are the odd stone seats that were constructed from prehistoric cists found when the access road for the now disused papermill was built. The four cists were found at the southern end of the Broomend of Crichie avenue; one was empty, while the others contained Beaker burials.

KIRKTON OF BOURTI

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Oldmeldrum**
Map: **NJ 8009 2488** | Sheets: **E421 L38** | Lat: **57.31404N** | Long: **2.33217W**

The recumbent here is absolutely enormous – 5m (16ft) long, 1.9m (6ft 4in) tall and 1.7m (5½ft) wide. Originally there were probably 10 or 11 stones – only four survive. The remaining, eastern flanker is 3m (10ft) tall. Please don't go into the field if there are crops growing; ask for permission at the farm if in doubt.

Photo © Martyn Copcutt

SOUTH YTHSIE

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Tarves**
Map: **NJ 8850 3040** | Sheets: **E421 L30** | Lat: **57.36392N** | Long: **2.19281W**

A really charming circle, set in farmland. It's just 8.2m (27ft) in diameter, with six large, boulder-like stones (the tallest 1.7m/5ft 7in). It may have originally been a four-poster.

"Very cute little circle, with fine views across the fields." Jackie Bates

LOANHEAD OF DAVIOT

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Daviot**
Map: **NJ 7477 2885** | Sheets: **E421 L38** | Lat: **57.34944N** | Long: **2.42089W**

This interesting multiphase site has a fine recumbent stone circle, 20.5m (64ft) in diameter, with an interior cist surrounded by a low covering of cairn material and a ring or kerb of smaller stones. The frost-cracked recumbent is large and still has its flankers, and there are eight other stones in the circle, graded in height. The stone east of the eastern flanker has a line of five cup-marks. Nearby is a more recent (*c*. 1500BC) circular cremation cemetery.

Nearby | At NJ 7456 2966, 836m (½ mile) NNW of Loanhead of Daviot, are the remaining stones of the **New Craig** stone circle: a cracked recumbent and its flankers. The stones are impressive (the recumbent is 4m/13ft long) and have been built into a stone wall. A number of other large stones can be seen in the woodland behind.

MAP

BACKHILL OF DRACHLAW

Stone Circle | Nearest Town: **Turriff**
Map: **NJ 6729 4633** | Sheets: **E425 L29** | Lat: **57.50597N** | Long: **2.54752W**

Quite an unusual circle for this part of the world, built from six very striking, large pebble-filled conglomerate rocks with no recumbent. The tallest stone is 1.5m (5ft) and the ring is about 8.5m (28ft) across.

"The stones are unusual in being basaltic with veins of pebbles in them."
Ewen Rennie

AIKEY BRAE

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Mintlaw**
Map: **NJ 9588 4709** | Sheets **E427 L30** | Lat: **57.51397N** | Long: **2.07042W**

If you walk through the mature plantation to reach this site you'll find it very dark and atmospheric, the trees creaking above you in the wind … stepping out into the sunlight to see the circle is an exciting moment. This is a Buchan-type recumbent stone circle, with a kerbed rubble bank or wall. Excavation in 2001 suggested the circle was imposed on a previous monument, as the holes for the stones cut through the rubble bank. The circle has five erect stones including the impressive and rather whale-like (or phallic, depending on your point of view) recumbent stone and the eastern flanker, and five prostrate stones including the western flanker.

Photo © Matthew Davidson

Nearby | At NJ 9610 4974, some 2.7km (1½ miles) north of Aikey Brae, **Loudon Wood** can be tricky to find in its plantation setting. It is badly damaged, with just the recumbent and four other stones (two of which are fallen)

remaining. The recumbent has been cracked by having a fire lit beneath it.

STRICHEN HOUSE

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Strichen**
Map: **NJ 9367 5449** | Sheets: **E427 L30** | Lat: **57.58041N** | Long: **2.1075W**

Strichen is a site with a fascinating history. In the early 19th century, all the stones of this recumbent circle, except the recumbent and flankers, were taken down by the tenant farmer. The landowner protested, and the circle was reconstructed, incorrectly and in a slightly different place. In 1960, all the stones were removed. The recumbent and flankers were replaced, only to be removed again in 1965 during tree-felling operations. Finally, the site was excavated by Aubrey Burl himself in 1979–83, and the circle reconstructed once again, this time in its original position. It's a Buchan-type circle, with the stones set on a low earth bank. There are seven stones in addition to the recumbent and flankers.

Photo © Michael Lindowsky

NETHERTON

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Crimond**
Map: **NK 0433 5722** | Sheets: **E427 L30** | Lat: **57.60496N** | Long: **1.9292W**

This partly restored recumbent stone circle, surrounded by a modern wall and set in a little copse of deciduous woodland, is especially lovely when the bluebells are out. It's about 17m (55ft) across, with eight stones, one of which has fallen. The recumbent is around 2.9m (9½ft) in length.

Nearby | At NK 0276 5716, in a small wooded area 1.6km (1 mile) west of Netherton, **Berrybrae** stone circle has just five remaining stones of an original nine, including the recumbent, 3.3m (10ft 10in) long. The stones are set into an oval bank, 13.7m (45ft) in diameter, which along with the stone circle was the first phase of the monument. A ring cairn in the centre held three cremation burials. The second phase saw the standing stones thrown down, the cairn levelled and an enclosed cremation cemetery created. The bank was reconstructed after Aubrey Burl's 1976 excavation.

MEMSIE

Cairn | Nearest Village: **Memsie**
Map: **NJ 9766 6205** | Sheets: **E427 L30** | Lat: **57.64836N** | Long: **2.04086W**

Once there were three large cairns here – all three around 90m (295ft) in diameter and 12m (39ft) high – as well as lots of small ones, but by 1845 only one remained. It is a well-preserved example and an impressive 24m (78ft) across and about 4.4m (14ft 5in) high. When excavated, a beaker and a broken, leaf-shaped sword were found.

MAP

Moray

ROTHIEMAY

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Milltown of Rothiemay**
Map: **NJ 5508 4872** | Sheets: **E425 L29** | Lat: **57.52639N** | Long: **2.75171W**

Set in a gently sloping field, this recumbent circle in Moray is 28m (92ft) in diameter, and may have had 12 to 14 stones before some of these were removed in the mid-19th century. Only five remain, including the recumbent, which is about 4.3m (14ft) long and up to 1.8m (5ft 10in) in height. It is profusely cup-marked, with at least 19 cup-marks on the top, and 72 on the back, some with rings. The flankers are missing. A geophysical survey suggested there may have been two rings or settings, as at Auchquhorthies (see page 313), or else perhaps a circle with outliers.

Photo © Golux

Nearby | At NJ 5822 5495, 7km (4½ miles) northeast of Rothiemay is the little **Thorax** stone circle, with all its six stones upright. The stone to the northwest has 22 cup-marks.

MAP

Highland

TOM NAN CARRAGH

Standing Stones | Nearest Village: **Dulnain Bridge**
Map: **NJ 0111 2464** | Sheets: **OL60/61 L36** | Lat: **57.30161N** | Long: **3.64289W**

The three standing stones here are visible from the A95, on a small hill in the floodplain of the River Spey. About 2.1m (7ft) tall and 100m (328ft) apart, the stones form a dogleg, the lie of the land meaning the end stones are not intervisible. The southerly stone has a partner that lies at its base.

BALNUARAN OF CLAVA Alt Names: **Mains Of Clava, The**

Clava Cairns
Clava Cairns | Nearest City: **Inverness**
Map: **NH 7572 4444** | Sheets: **E422 L27** | Lat: **57.47311N** | Long: **4.07398W**

These three large Bronze Age cairns, built around 2000BC, are each surrounded by a circle of standing stones and have given their name to the Clava type of burial cairn. Excavations during the 1990s by Richard Bradley showed the three cairns and surrounding circles at Balnuaran of Clava were all constructed at the same time. Significant amounts of quartz were found, suggesting that the cairns could have glowed white when newly constructed and would have been very striking, at over 3m (10ft) high originally and with a rubble platform extending to the outer standing stones. The kerb of all three cairns is graduated, with the biggest stones to the south or southwest, and causeways link some standing stones with each cairn. It seems likely that each cairn contained a single burial, as at Corrimony (see page 326).

BALNUARAN OF CLAVA NE

This chambered ring cairn with a passage and a 16.7m (55ft) diameter kerb is surrounded by a circle of 11 standing stones. Several stones have cup-marks,

including two kerb stones, the standing stone northwest of the passage and a horizontal slab in the chamber wall. Originally both this and Balnuaran of Clava SW would have had corbelled roofs with a capstone, covered with cairn material. The monument is aligned with the midwinter solstice; this has been observed by covering the chamber and passage with tarpaulin so the rays of the setting sun can be seen to travel down the passage, dividing the chamber in half and creating an intense beam of light on the back wall.

Photo © Jan Holm

BALNUARAN OF CLAVA CENTRAL

The central cairn has a central chamber but no passage, and was never roofed. The kerb displays contrasting colours and textures, as well cup-marks, and is 18.3 × 15.9m (60 × 52ft) in diameter. Nine standing stones surround the cairn.

BALNUARAN OF CLAVA SW

Balnuaran of Clava SW has a 16 × 15m (52 × 49ft) kerb and 10 surviving stones in the surrounding circle, through which a road has been built. This monument is

almost identical in design and construction to Balnuaran of Clava NE and shares its orientation on the midwinter sun. Viewed from the northeast cairn, the sun would have seemed to set on top of it. Cup-marks can be seen on a foundation stone in the chamber, west of the entrance, and a stone on the south side of the passage.

Nearby | At NH 6878 4508 (sheets: E416, L26), 7km (4½ miles) west of Balnuaran of Clava, **Raigmore**, also known as Stoneyfield, is a reconstructed Clava cairn, moved when its original site was destroyed by road development. It's a multiphase site, once believed to be a stone circle. More recently it was seen as a denuded kerb cairn, but the excavations in 1971–2 showed something more complex, developing from pit-digging and deposition in the early Neolithic, followed by a possibly roofed timber structure with a central hearth, and finally a cairn covering a number of cist burials. It was moved to its present position by volunteers in 1974–5, and has recently been adopted by local people as part of the Adopt a Monument scheme.

CARN DALEY

Clava Cairn | Nearest Village: **Drumnadrochit**
Map: **NH 4945 3146** | Sheets: **E431 L26** | Lat: **57.34867N** | Long: **4.50355W**

A Clava-type burial cairn, 12m (39ft) across, pretty badly damaged. It was excavated in around 1900 but there seem to be no records of this. The kerb is evident on the southern side and the ring of standing stones is mostly missing. Aerial or pole photography is useful here, as the site is much easier to understand from above. **See the Megalithic Portal** page for a link to a 3D model of this cairn.

MAP

CORRIMONY

Clava Cairn | Nearest Village: **Cannich**
Map: **NH 3830 3029** | Sheets: **E431 L26** | Lat: **57.33437N** | Long: **4.68793W**

A lovely example of a Clava cairn. Excavation in 1952 led to the discovery of a

crouched burial beneath the floor of the chamber; the monument was subsequently restored. It stands on the floodplain of the River Enrick and the kerbed cairn is made of water-worn stones. The chamber is open and the passage is still roofed, so you'll have to crawl in (there's usually a large puddle to add to the fun!). Eleven standing stones surround the cairn, four of which (those nearest the entrance to the passage) have been re-erected – the two to the west are Victorian replacements, made from lintels from the passage. One stone to the northwest has cup-marks on the outer face. The large slab on the top of the cairn, also cup-marked, was probably a capstone.

SWORDALE HILL

Rock Art | Nearest Village: **Evanton**
Map: **NH 5772 6616** | Sheets: **E432 L21** | Lat: **57.66273N** | Long: **4.38657W**

There are at least 28 separate cup-marked rocks here, many discovered since 2011 by Douglas Scott, who also found a henge on the hill's Druim Mor ridge (where there's also a chambered cairn at NH 5788 6614). This is the largest concentration of rock art in the Highlands, a fine display of cup-marks and cup-and-rings. Scott, who suggests a midwinter sunrise alignment for the henge

entrance, believes the rock art was ritually created “as a means to contact the spirit ancestors in the underworld as the sun or moon rose out of, or set into, the land of the dead”.

CLACH MHIC MHIOS

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Lothbeg**
Map: **NC 9404 1508** | Sheets: **E444 L17** | Lat: **58.11199N** | Long: **3.79991W**

Standing among the heather on a hillock in what is surely one of this book’s remotest locations (it’s not far from the road, but there’s not a lot going on up here in Glen Loth), this splendid standing stone is a very impressive 3.3m (11ft) red sandstone monolith, up to 1.4m (4ft 11in) broad. The path – if you can call it a path – from the road can be extremely boggy. In 1911 there were apparently two stones of smaller size nearby, but there’s no sign of them now.

LEARABLE HILL

Multiple Stone Rows | Nearest Village: **Helmsdale**
Map: **NC 8925 2355** | Sheets: **E444 L17** | Lat: **58.18683N** | Long: **3.88523W**

Up on Learable Hill, there is a cluster of four groups of stone rows together with a standing stone, stone circle and several cairns. This was clearly a special place in the prehistoric period. The stone rows, in common with others in the region, are composed of small stones, mostly between 0.1m and 0.4m, (3in and 1ft 3in), and many are hidden in the heather. All the rows are of the characteristic Caithness and Sutherland fan-shaped type. The northern group includes at least three lines of stones, while the adjacent one has up to nine individual rows extending for about 54m (177ft). The remaining rows are separated from the northern ones by a large standing stone (at NC 8925 2349) that has been Christianized by a small, incised cross. South of this stone is another group that includes seven lines of edge-set stones. The final group is situated east of the large standing stone and can be particularly difficult to find. Only three stones now survive but it is known to have been more extensive.

The stone circle (at NC 8916 2351) is a short distance to the west of the rows and has at least seven upright, small slabs around an area measuring 20 × 17.5m (65ft 6in × 57½ft). Some of the cairns in the vicinity may be the result of clearance but most are probably associated with the rows and circle.

Nearby | At NC 8757 2830, 5km (just over 3 miles) northwest of Learable Hill, is **Kinbrace Burn** chambered cairn, an Orkney-Cromarty short-horned cairn with a Camster-type chamber. Measuring 17.2 × 16.6m (56ft 5in × 54ft 5in), it's badly robbed and clearly defined only to the north. The near-central chamber is very disturbed and filled with rubble. A heart-shaped serpentine amulet was apparently found here during excavations before 1911, but is now lost. There are more cairns of various types near here, but this one is the closest to the road.

Caithness (NE Highlands)

BADANLOCH Alt Name: Cnoc Molach

Multiple Stone Rows | Nearest Village: **Kinbrace**
Map: **NC 7826 3516** | Sheets: **E448 L17** | Lat: **58.28814N** | Long: **4.07812W**

There are hut circles, a field system and a burnt mound up here on the Cnoc Molach moorland, as well as seven rows of stones, aligned NNE–SSW. Around 28 stones have been identified. The largest stone in the alignment is just 0.7m (2ft 4in) high – most of them are tiny and only visible when the vegetation has died back.

MAP

BULDOO Alt Name: Latheron Two Stones

Standing Stones | Nearest Village: **Latheron**
Map: **ND 2000 3369** | Sheets: **E450 L11** | Lat: **58.28452N** | Long: **3.36597W**

Buldoo is a very large standing stone, measuring 3.9m (12ft 8in) tall, with a rather smaller, squatter companion located to the southwest.

Photo © Miles Newman

HILL O' MANY STANES Alt Name: Mid Clyth

Multiple Stone Rows | Nearest Village: **Mid Clyth**
Map: **ND 2952 3840** | Sheets: **E450 L11/12** | Lat: **58.32849N** | Long: **3.20504W**

The most famous, best-preserved and most accessible of the multiple-stone-row sites in Scotland, this is an impressive place even though the stones are quite small. They may all be less than 1m (3ft 3in) tall, many hidden among the gorse and heather, but there are lots and lots of them – around 200 of 250 that were visible in the 19th century, arranged in 22 rows, forming a fan-shaped pattern. Alexander Thom proposed that the stones formed a lunar observatory, and – having made similar observations at other sites – that major and minor lunar standstills can be sighted from here. This is disputed by most current archaeoastronomers and archaeologists – indeed it would seem difficult to use such small stones for sighting.

CAIRN O' GET Alt Name: **Garrywhin**

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Ulbster**
Map: **ND 3133 4112** | Sheets: **E450 L11/12** | Lat: **58.35316N** | Long: **3.17502W**

The Cairn o' Get is a Neolithic chambered cairn of the short-horned Orkney-Cromarty type, damaged but still impressive. It seems to have originated as a round chambered cairn and is about 2.2m (7ft 4in) in height, with two horned forecourts, one to the north and one to the south. The passage is 3.3m (10ft 9in) long, open to the sky – as is the chamber itself. Excavations in 1866 found the bones of seven or so people in the antechamber, and a further cremation deposit in the main chamber.

Nearby | At ND 3138 4129, 178m (584ft) NNE of Cairn o' Get, are the **Garrywhin** multiple stone rows. Here, six to eight rows of three to 13 stones radiate from a cairn around 10m (33ft) in diameter, with a cist burial. The stones are small, many hardly showing above the peat. There are further groups of stone rows nearby: at **Broughwin** (ND 3124 4127, ND 3124 4095, ND 3120 4098), **Lochch Watenan** (ND 3174 4108), **Groat's Loch** (ND 3102 4065) and **Clash-an-Dam** (ND 3122 4041).

SOUTH YARROWS

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Thrumster**
Map: **ND 3048 4320** | Sheets: **E450 L11/12** | Lat: **58.37164N** | Long:

3.19011W

The South Yarrows long cairn is quite close to the car park and road, but the best way to it is to follow the South Yarrows Archaeological Trail (the link to download a guide is on the Megalithic Portal web pages for these sites). It takes about two hours, has some steep climbs and there are pleasing duckboards across the boggy bits making you feel like you're having a proper adventure. The trail takes in various sites, including, at the start of the trail, a broch on an islet in the loch (a multiphase construction, with the walls remaining to 2.7m/8ft 10in high in places), as well as hut circles, a hill fort and two horned long cairns.

SOUTH LONG CAIRN

At ND 3048 4320, 467m (¼ mile) WSW of the broch, is the southerly long cairn, an Orkney-Cromarty type, built with huge slabs of Caithness flagstone. It retains much of its covering cairn and has a Camster-type chamber with three stalls at the eastern end. A similar, smaller chamber in the middle of the cairn has been destroyed along with half its passage. The cairn is about 78m (255ft) long, varying in height from 1.5m to 3.7m (5ft to 12ft). The profile and the short passage suggest it began life as a chambered round cairn.

Photo © Cezary Namirski

NORTH LONG CAIRN

At ND 3049 4346, 269m (883ft) north of the above long cairn, is another horned long cairn. This is less complete than the south cairn, but some detail of the east-facing chamber can still be seen. Both of these cairns seem to have been reused for centuries; a later cist burial was inserted here, which contained an urn and 70 tiny lignite disc beads from a jet necklace. A carved stone ball (see page 312) with eight knobs was found nearby in the 1930s and is now in the Royal Museum of Scotland.

Nearby | At ND 3129 4403, 1.2km (¾ mile) northeast of South Yarrows, on the eastern shore of the Loch of Yarrows, the **Battle Moss** stone rows include eight more or less parallel rows of 18–21 stone slabs, aligned north–south and stretching about 40m (131ft). None is more than 0.3m (1ft) high – many are much smaller – and about 100 of them remain. Up to 80 of them remain visible above ground or just beneath the surface. Here in 2003 Kenneth Brophy led the first excavation of a Scottish multiple stone row in modern times. No dating evidence was recovered but nothing was found to suggest this is anything other

than a Bronze Age monument. Alexander Thom had proposed that this and other sites had lunar alignments, and that the rows here were now irregular because some stones had been moved since erection. However the excavation showed that some stones had been deliberately aligned off-axis, so Battle Moss had not been built as a series of completely parallel lines, thus disproving the alignment theory. In all likelihood, the monument had been constructed over a period of time rather than in one burst of activity. Further research by Alex Carnes has suggested that the stone rows of Caithness and Dartmoor are linked, and that both are gradual developments of the long mound and older long-house traditions of honouring the ancestors.

MAP

ACHAVANICH Alt Names: **Loch Stemster, Achkinloch**
Stone Setting | Nearest Village: **Latheron**
Map: **ND 1879 4177** | Sheet **E450 L11/12** | Lat: **58.35687N** | Long: **3.38948W**

Achavanich is an unusual horseshoe-shaped setting. The stones have their narrow rather than broad profiles turned toward the centre. There are 34 stones still in position, from an original 54, mostly on the western side. They are set among the heather with a good view of the mountainous Highlands to the southwest; the name means “field of the monks”. A cist burial found about 700m (under ½ mile) away was found to contain a Beaker burial that, thanks to recent work led by Maya Hoole, is now recognized as one of the earliest Bronze Age burials in Scotland (2455– 2147BC). The young woman, nicknamed Ava, has been facially reconstructed. Analysis of pollen found on pottery buried with her identified many plants and flowers, including meadowsweet and St John’s wort, known to have medicinal uses.

Photo © Drew Parsons

GREY CAIRNS OF CAMSTE

Chambered Cairns | Nearest Town: **Wick**
Map: **ND 2601 4420** | Sheets **E450 L11/12** | Lat: **58.37995N** | Long: **3.26689W**

CHAMBERED LONG CAIRN

Surely one of the most impressive, dramatic and well-preserved chambered cairns in Britain, the Orkney-Cromarty-type horned long cairn at ND 2601 4420 is 69.5m (228ft) long, with a forecourt at each end and two separate chambers with their own passages and entrances, each with a sheep-proof gate. They're easily accessible, close to the road and you don't really need a torch as they have roof lights. You will have to crawl, though, so be prepared to get muddy. Excavations in the 1970s demonstrated that the monument began as two round

cairns, later joined together with more cairn material. The passages were extended at this time.

CHAMBERED ROUND CAIRN

The round cairn at ND 2608 4403 is a well-preserved Orkney-Cromarty type, some 3.7m (12ft) high and 18m (59ft) across. A passage leads to a central corbelled chamber with dry-stone walling, divided into three by large vertical slabs. Excavation in the 19th century uncovered burnt bones, pottery and flint tools from the chamber, as well as further skeletal remains in the chamber and passage.

Nearby | At ND 2602 4379, about 250m (820ft) south of the Grey Cairns, the **Camster** stone rows are apparently intact, with six rows, up to 26.8m (88ft) in length, running more or less north–south. Many (if not most) of the stones are under peat; in September 2016 only two were clearly visible.

CNOC FREICEADAIN

Chambered Cairns | Nearest Village: **Reay**
Map: **ND 0132 6541** | Sheets: **E450 L11/12** | Lat: **58.56553N** | Long: **3.69805W**

Two Neolithic long-horned chambered cairns occupy the top of the hill, with a view over the decommissioned Dounreay nuclear power station. The cairn at ND 0132 6541 is 67m (219ft) long and aligned northeast–southwest. At ND 0124 6532, just 100m (328ft) from its sibling and set at right angles to it, is the Na Tri Sithean cairn (the name, meaning “the three fairy mounds”, originally referred to both tombs). Na Tri Sithean is another long and impressive cairn – at 71m (233ft), it is one of the longest of its type. It has a round mound at either end, probably both containing a chamber. It’s likely that it began life as two separate round cairns, later joined together.

Photo © Hamish Fenton

Nearby | Within 1km (0.6 miles) NNW and WNW of the two cairns are the **Upper Dounreay** stone rows, chambered cairn and standing stone. At ND 0117 6596, 564m (1,850ft) NNW and visible from here, is the stone row at **Creag Bhreac Mhor**.

Clach An Truishal
Steinacleit
Clach An Tursa
LEWIS
Stornoway/Ornabhagh
Callanish 3
Callanish 1 / Calanais
Achmore
Callanish 4
Loch Seaforth
Clach Mhic Leoid
Coire Na Feinne
Borvemore
HARRIS
NORTH UIST
Barpa Langass
Pobull Fhinn
Suidhheachadh Sealg
Stiaraval
BENBECULA
Eyre
Vatten
SKYE
Crois Chnoca Breaca
SOUTH UIST
Cladh Hallan
Suardal
Na Clachan Bhreige
Rubh' an Dunain
BARRA
0 10 20 30 km
0 5 10 15 miles
Western Isles
A858
Olcote
Callanish 8
Callanish 1 / Calanais
Callanish 3
Callanish 2
Callanish 4
B8059
B8011
Loch
Tunabhat

Western Isles

Isle of Syke

NA CLACHAN BHREIGE

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Elgol**
Map: **NG 5434 1769** | Sheets: **E411 L32** | Lat: **57.18392N** | Long: **6.06695W**

Set amid some truly spectacular scenery on Skye, this is a difficult site to access, surrounded on three sides by water. The route from the Elgol road can be very boggy, with a stream to ford. The name means “false stones”. Three stones remain standing, while one has fallen, in a circle originally measuring about 5.4m (18ft) in diameter. The stones are 1.5m (5ft), 2m (6½ft), and 1.8m (6ft) respectively; their prone companion is 3.5m (11½ft) in length. As at many sites, they’re said to be men turned to stone, but this time for deserting their wives – a salutary lesson to would-be philanderers.

SUARDAL Alt Name: **An Sithean**

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Broadford**

Map: **NG 6272 2203** | Sheets: **E411 L32** | Lat: **57.2273N** | Long: **5.93277W**

In a stunning setting, this chambered cairn (probably Hebridean type) is easy to spot, set on a knoll close to the road. It is about 12m (39ft) across and up to 2m (6½ft) high; the larger stones sticking out could be what is left of the chamber. The alternative name means “hill of the fairies”, so watch out!

Photo © Andy Burnham

Nearby | At NG 6417 2378, 2.3km (just under 1½ miles) from Suardal, by the roadside in Broadford, a mound covered with flowers and trees has something of an atmosphere of mystery. Known as **Corry**, or Liveras, this badly robbed Hebridean type chambered cairn is about 23 × 16.7m (77 × 55ft), and 4m (13ft) tall. Finds here included an (archer's?) wristguard of grey-green stone (a similar one was found on the beach, perhaps dumped there) and a pottery urn containing a secondary burial. Part of the eastern side of the cairn was destroyed when the road was made, revealing at least one stone cist. The 2.4 × 1.8m (8 × 5ft) capstone is apparently still to the north side of the mound.

RUBH' AN DUNAIN

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Carbost**
Map: **NG 3934 1636** | Sheets: **E411 L32** | Lat: **57.16381N** | Long: **6.31299W**

Close to the shore of Loch na h-Airde, this would have been an imposing example of a Hebridean-type round cairn built of rectangular slabs of dry-stone wall, surrounded by round boulders from the beach, about 20m (66ft) across and 3m (10ft) tall. The roof is missing, so you can easily see into the polygonal chamber, and there's a 3m (10ft) passage. During excavation in 1931–2 the remains of six adults were found, along with flint and quartz chips and pottery that offered evidence of the use of the forecourt as a focus for communal gathering. The chamber appears to have been deliberately filled in with earth following the final burial.

South Uist

MAP

“There is another ‘rather doubtful’ prehistoric cairn just to the west (at NG 3929 1639), worth having a look for it while you’re there. If you find it, send us a photo!” Andy Burnham

Photo © Les Hamilton

VATTEN

Probable Chambered Cairns | Nearest Village: **Dunvegan**
Map: **NG 2984 4399** | Sheets: **E407/410 L23** | Lat: **57.40572N** | Long: **6.49976W**

There are two (probable) Hebridean-type chambered cairns here, sited much like

Cnoc Freiceadain (see page 331). Both are pretty ruinous but still impressive on the horizon and worth an explore. The southern cairn is up to 3.3m (11ft) high and 33.5–36.5m (110–120ft) across. Robbing has created a massive central hollow without exposing a central chamber (presumably there is one). The northern cairn is taller, about 5m (16ft) high, and 30m (98ft) across, and in better condition than its sibling.

EYRE Alt Name: Sornaichean Coir Fhinn

Stone Row | Nearest Village: **Kensaleyre**
Map: **NG 4143 5251** | Sheets: **E408 L23** | Lat: **57.4888N** | Long: **6.31636W**

Two stones on the shore of Loch Eyre. They're about 4.2m (14ft) apart, the northern stone is 1.5m (5ft) and the southern is 1.7m (5½ft). It's said there was once a third stone, but there's no sign of it now. In folklore, these are the stones that supported Fingal's cooking pot over the fire.

CLADH HALLAN

Prehistoric Settlement | Nearest Village: **Dalabrog**
Map: **NF 7314 2198** | Sheets: **E453 L31** | Lat: **57.17173N** | Long: **7.41035W**

At Cladh Hallann on South Uist the remains of several Bronze Age and Iron Age houses, including two double ("figure of eight") round houses, were found in the machair during sand quarrying. The better preserved of the two double roundhouses can be visited. One house showed evidence of continuous habitation and repair over many hundreds of years, which is very unusual. The site is best known for one of the first discoveries of prehistoric mummies ever made in the UK. Two burials showed evidence of mummification, and one body turned out to be a composite – made up of the skeletal remains of three individuals. The head and neck belonged to one man, the jaw to a second and the rest of the body to a third. The head and jaw, like the remains of a woman and infant also found, had been curated for about 300–400 years before burial, but the rest of the body belonged to a man who had died 500 years earlier.

Benbecula

CROIS CHNOCA BREACA

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Stoneybridge**
Map: **NF 7340 3366** | Sheets: **E453 L22** | Lat: **57.276401N** | Long: **7.421388W**

This fine pillar of Lewisian gneiss, 2m (6½ft) high, was named for its resemblance to a cross. It is also somewhat reminiscent of a human figure with head and arms, apparently eagerly gazing out to sea. It stands on a mound of packing stones and it is not clear whether it was deliberately installed in its current leaning position.

Nearby | At NF 7703 3211, 3.9km (under 2½ miles) east of Crois Chnoca Breaca, is **An Carra** standing stone, also known as Bheinn a'Charra. It is a fine stone, tapering toward the top, and an impressive 5.2m (17ft) high.

STIARAVAL

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Gramsdal**
Map: **NF 8121 5260** | Sheets: **E453 L22** | Lat: **57.45131N** | Long: **7.31694W**

This chambered cairn on Benbecula had a southeast entrance, and the passage, of which only the northern side remains, led to a circular chamber. It's difficult to estimate exactly how big the cairn was because much of the stone has been robbed away.

Nearby | At NF 8170 5247, 505m (1,657ft) east of Stiaraval, is the **Airidh na h-aon Oidche** chambered cairn, sited on a hilltop and appearing to form part of the horizon along with two distant hills over on the Isle of Skye 42km (26 miles) away. At NF 8143 5313, 576m (1,890ft) NNE of Stiaraval, is the playing-card shaped **Stiarval** standing stone, damaged by frost. At around NF 7360 4952, about 10km (6 miles) southwest of Stiaraval, is **Lionacleit**, where it is possible to see the preserved remains of a prehistoric submerged woodland on the shoreline.

SUIDHHEACHADH SEALG Alt Name: Gramisdale South

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Gramsdal**
Map: **NF 8249 5521** | Sheets: **E453 L22** | Lat: **57.47555N** | Long: **7.29908W**

A badly damaged circle, originally around 27m (89ft) in diameter. The tallest stone may have had its top broken off – it is now about 1.5m (5ft) high. The five stones of the western arc are less than 1m (3ft 3in) high, some also broken, and there are four or five fallen stones. Within the circle are the low remains of a chambered cairn. There's a standing stone close by to the north, at NF 8250 5528.

Nearby | At NF 8251 5613, 918m (just over ½ mile) north of Suidhheachadh Sealg, is **Gramisdale**, a ruinous stone circle originally *c*. 26m (85ft) in diameter.

BARPA LANGASS

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Clachan a Luib**
Map: **NF 8377 6573** | Sheets: **E454 L18** | Lat: **57.57053N** | Long: **7.29154W**

On North Uist, this is a Hebridean round cairn, which have "funnel" entrances, narrow passages and simple chambers. Early examples, like this one, have a peristalith (circle of stones) around the perimeter. It's about 4m (13ft) high and 24m (80ft) across, with 14 stones of the peristalith visible. The funnel-shaped forecourt is on the eastern side, full of material removed during attempts to find the passage. The oval chamber is 4 × 1.8m (13 × 6ft), roofed with three lintels. There is no access to the interior due to the collapse of part of the entrance passage.

POBULL FHINN Alt Name: **Ben Langass**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Clachan a Luib**
Map: **NF 8428 6502** | Sheets: **E454 L18** | Lat: **57.56454N** | Long: **7.28207W**

In a breathtaking location just over the hill from Barpa Langass, this circle of about 24 stones, *c*. 18m (59ft) across its longest axis, is built on an artificial platform. The largest stone is about 1.5m (5ft) high.

Nearby | There are cairns at NF 8323 6297, 2.3km (1½ miles) southwest of Pobull Fhinn and at NF 8334 6290, 2.3km (1½ miles) SSW; at NF 8289 6303 is **Loch a' Phobuill** circle, 2.4km (1½ miles) to the SSW of Pobull Fhinn; a chambered cairn is at NF 8331 6271, 2.5km (1½ miles) SSW of Pobull Fhinn.

Isle of Harris

BORVEMORE

Stone Row | Nearest Village: **Scarista**
Map: **NG 0202 9392** | Sheets: **E455 L18** | Lat: **57.83518N** | Long: **7.02245W**

This fine stone on Harris stands 2m (6½ft) tall, with wonderful views across the sea to Taransay. Two nearby prostrate slabs may have once been upright, part of a stone setting. In the early 20th century there were four fallen stones, and it's said there was a stone circle here but this is unconfirmed.

COIRE NA FEINNE

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Horgabost**
Map: **NG 0472 9663** | Sheets: **E455 L18** | Lat: **57.8612N** | Long: **6.98054W**

Planted up with flowers, the remains of this chambered cairn sit in the corner of a steeply sloping garden beside the Tarbert to Leverburgh road. The cairn was all gone before the end of the 18th century, but the stones of the chamber and the fallen capstone, 2.2m (7ft) across with two cup-marks on the upper surface, are quite impressive. Human bones were found here in 1859.

CLACH MHIC LEOID Alt Names: **MacLeod's Stone, Nisabost**

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Horgabost**
Map: **NG 0410 9718** | Sheets: **E455 L18** | Lat: **57.86573N** | Long: **6.9916W**

An impressive stone, possibly once part of a row, in a really spectacular location overlooking the sea. It's 3.3m (10½ft) in height and 1.4m (4ft 6in) wide. Small boulders at the foot of the stone, and two large slabs nearby, are probably the remains of a cairn. The SSW face of the stone has veins of feldspar and quartz. It has been noted that the profile of its top is identical to the most striking part of Taransay behind. Coincidence – or not?

Photo © Elizabeth Yeatts

LOCH SEAFORTH Alt Name: **Sìdeval**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Arivruaich**
Map: **NB 2782 1664** | Sheets: **E457 L13** | Lat: **58.055N** | Long: **6.61548W**

An isolated, ruinous 16.6m (54ft) circle with wonderful views. Seven stones are visible of a probable 10. One stands in the field, one has fallen, there are three in the field wall, one in the north wall of the ruined blackhouse and probably two within the eastern wall and two in the southern wall. About 98m (100ft) south of the circle, below the high-water mark, is a setting of 20 or so stones on the shore.

Nearby | At NB 2724 1455, 2.2km (1¼ miles) SSW of Loch Seaforth, on Lewis, is the 5m (16ft) **Cailleach na Mointeach** kerbed cairn, recently discovered on top of one of the hills that form the "knees" of the female landscape form known as the Cailleach na Mointeach ("old woman of the moors"), also called the Sleeping Beauty (see page 341). This isolated site is a challenge to get to. The nearest road is the reasonable track off the A859 that runs between the end of Loch Seaforth and Loch Skebacleit, and then it is a hike up a steep hill.

MAP

Isle of Lewis

ACHMORE

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Achmore**
Map: **NB 3174 2926** | Sheets: **E459 L8** | Lat: **58.1704N** | Long: **6.56376W**

Uncovered gradually as peat was cut for fuel, the stones of this circle were first noticed in the 1930s. Investigation in the 1980s by Gerald and Margaret Ponting (now Margaret Curtis) demonstrated that the site was, in fact, a circle, about 41m (135ft) in diameter and with 22 stones, two of which remain upright. From here the hills of the Cailleach na Mointeach or Sleeping Beauty (see page 341) resemble a pregnant woman – this is the only place from where they have this appearance and it seems possible the circle was sited here for this reason. The walk to the site from the parking place is boggy.

CALLANISH Alt Name: Calanais

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Callanish**
Map: **NB 2130 3301** | Sheets: **E459 L8** | Lat: **58.19753N** | Long: **6.74513W**

A number of sites come under the general heading of Callanish, although these days the main site is known and signposted by its Gaelic equivalent, Calanais. The Isle of Lewis is a long way from most of Britain, and the journey to get there, whether by air or sea, makes a visit feel like a real accomplishment. On a hillock called Cnoc an Tursa (“hill of sorrow”), the setting of around 40 stones, which incorporates a later chambered cairn with a second cairn nearby, resembles from above a Celtic or wheel cross, with stone rows extending from the circle approximately toward the cardinal points. The double northern row is closed by the arc of the circle. A single stone standing opposite the inmost of the southern alignment suggests that this may also have been a double row originally. Outside the southwest arc of the circle is an outlier, which may be the remains of a second circle.

The stones are of wonderful Lewis gneiss, said to have come from the west side of the ridge Druim nan Eum (NB 228 338), and all are striking no matter

what the weather. The tallest, a truly impressive 4.7m (15ft 7in) high, stands in the centre of the circle; the others range down to 1m (3ft 3in). The site was cleared of 1.5m (5ft) of peat in the mid-19th century. The chambered cairn within the circle incorporates the central pillar within the line of its kerb on the west, and two of the circle stones on the east. Some cairn material remains but the double chamber no longer has its capstones. The second cairn, reduced to ground level, impinges on the northeast arc of the circle.

A number of alignments have been proposed for the stone circle; most famous is that it marks the major southern lunar standstill that occurs every 18.6 years, when the moon is seen apparently born from between the thighs of the Sleeping Beauty, skims the horizon and vanishes, only to reappear to shine dramatically into the circle (see box, page 341). A legend tells of a Shining One who passes down the avenue on midsummer morning, heralded by a cuckoo.

The Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) fund is supporting Calanais Visitor Centre to work in collaboration with the University of St Andrews to create 3D scans of the stone circles and map buried features. This amazing site has a car park and a visitor's centre, and the stones are free to enter.

Nearby | Around NB 213 338, 788m (½ mile) north of the stone circle, is **Callanish 16**, a 1m (3ft 3in) high stone between the two most northerly houses of Callanish village, to the east of the road.

Photo © Sven Stroop

What is the Lunar Standstill?

Vicky Tuckman (Morgan), former Editor of the Megalithic Portal

As solstices are for the sun, so lunar standstills are for the moon, but while the solstice takes place twice a year, in June and December, lunar standstills follow an 18.6-year cycle (not the same thing as the 19-year Metonic cycle). They occur when the moon reaches its most extreme point in relation to the horizon; in other words when it is at its highest and lowest point in the sky, and its rising and setting points are at their most northerly and southerly, and the moon appears to stand still before starting to retrace its steps on subsequent nights. At this time, when the moon is closest to the horizon, an optical illusion makes it seem much larger than usual – and the further north you travel, the more impressive this becomes. For a few months either side of the standstill, the effect is

almost as impressive.

The moon last reached its furthest southerly point in September 2006. The next major standstill will be in April 2025 – so not too long to wait if you are a follower of deep time.

Both the northern and southern major extremes occur in the same lunar month, but it is the major southernmost rising point that the sites of Callanish seem designed to observe.

CALLANISH 2 Alt Name: **Cnoc Ceann a'Gharraidh**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Callanish**
Map: **NB 2221 3261** | Sheets: **E459 L8** | Lat: **58.19454N** | Long: **6.72913W**

Before the peat was cleared from the site in 1858 only the five stones still standing could be seen. They range in height from 1.9m to 3.2m (6ft 3in to 10½ft). The removal of about 0.9m (3ft) of peat revealed further stones, as well as five holes containing fragments of charcoal, possibly post-holes; these are more or less invisible to the naked eye these days. There's a badly damaged cairn near the centre of the circle. One stone, thought erroneously to have an ogham inscription, was taken to Stornoway where it stood for some 60 years opposite the entrance to Lews Castle until being partially broken up for building material in 1919. This circle is intervisible with several other sites in the landscape; the Pontings have suggested that its major axis alignment represents a symbolic indication of moonrise at the southern major standstill, an alignment that is also found at other sites in the area. In addition, seen from here, Callanish 6 would have appeared silhouetted against the rising moon at the southern minor standstill. When the stones of Callanish 10 were erect, they would have been very conspicuous on the horizon; at the northern major standstill, the moon would have been seen to rise over them and set over Cnoc a' Phrionnsa, a nearby chambered cairn.

CALLANISH 3 Alt Name: **Cnoc Fillibhir Bheag**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Callanish**
Map: **NB 2251 3271** | Sheets: **E459 L8** | Lat: **58.19558N** | Long: **6.72414W**

Probably the most visited of the minor sites, as it's close to the main road. The four stones that stand within the ring are an interesting feature and there has been much discussion about the shape of the site: is it a pair of concentric circles, or perhaps a circle containing a quadrilateral setting? Eight stones stand in the outer ring, ranging in height from 1m (3ft 3in) to 1.7m (5ft 10in), with five fallen.

Nearby | At NB 2268 3207, 659m (less than ½ mile) SSE of Callanish 3, is **Cnoc Fillinhir Mhor** stone row. At NB 2297 3362, 1km (0.6 miles) northeast of Callanish 3 is **Callanish 10** stone circle, excavated in 2003 by Colin Richards and team from the University of Manchester.

Photo © Spumador

The Song of the Low Moon

Grahame Gardner, geomancer specializing in geopathic/technopathic stress remediation

Solar alignments at prehistoric sites are relatively straightforward to demonstrate. The apparent position of sunrises throughout the year has not moved much since Neolithic times, and the sun's cycle is regular and fairly easy to plot. Not so the moon's, however. Because of the wobble in its orbit – like a plate spinning on its rim – the moon can go through the extremes of rising and setting positions in a month that the sun follows over a whole year. Add to this the greater wobble of the 19-year Metonic cycle and other longer-term rhythms, and many archaeologists would argue that lunar alignments are unlikely, as these cycles are just too long-term to have been noticed by ancient people. But just because the cycles would have required observation by more than one generation, doesn't mean that people weren't trying to record them. The night sky must have played a big part in our ancestors' lives, especially in the long, dark winters in the north. The main site at Callanish seems designed for observation of the major southern standstill, as Gerald and Margaret Ponting (now Margaret Curtis) discovered back in the 1980s. When viewed from the end of the Callanish avenue, the low moon skims just above the stones of the east row before setting behind the rocky outcrop of Cnoc-an-Tursa to the south. Then the magic happens … for a brief moment the moon reappears in the centre of the circle, just between the tallest megalith and the cairn, and then vanishes once more. This only happens at the major lunar standstill.

I was at Callanish 2 for the lunar standstill in 2006, gazing southward toward the Sleeping Beauty mountain (the Cailleach na Mointeach, or Old Woman of the Moor), where the lowest full moon since 1987 was expected to rise. As midnight approached I was considering giving up, as it looked like the moonrise would be obscured by clouds, but gave one last glance toward the south, where a faint coppery glow was just suffusing the Sleeping Beauty's thighs. This was it! An ululation of welcome could be heard from the main site of Callanish, and we stood in awed reverence as the beautiful golden disc slid majestically into the sky over the recumbent goddess. I could feel the stones of the circle come

alive around us as they drank in the lunar energy. We watched for an hour or two as the moon rolled low over the body and face of the Sleeping Beauty, then as some clouds started to develop, we walked up to the main Callanish stones to join the throng there.

The clouds cleared long enough for a good view of the moon skimming over the stones of the east row as it moved toward setting, but soon it was completely obscured and we could only guess at its position. It looked like that was the end of the show, but right at the crucial minute there was a brief coppery flash in the middle of the circle, like a candle flame guttering – and then it was gone. It felt like the clocks had been reset; the old cycle had ended and a new pattern had emerged to set the tone for the next 19 years.

A longer version is available at: www.westerngeomancy.org/articles/the-song-of-thelow-moon-2006/

CALLANISH 4 Alt Name: **Ceann Hulavig**

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Garynahine**

Map: **NB 2299 3041** | Sheets: **E459 L8** | Lat: **58.17531N** | Long: **6.71339W**

Five tall, narrow stones remain here, with their wider faces turned to the interior. The circle is about 10m (33ft) across, and contains the remains of a cairn. The stones are irregularly spaced, suggesting one may be missing. The tallest is 2.7m (9ft) high. Park by the side of the road – it's a short walk through a gate to the boggy site.

Photo © Sandy Gerrard

Nearby | At NB 2343 2990, about 674m (under ½ mile) ESE of Callanish 4, is **Callanish 5**, or Airigh nam Bidearan, stone row. An "airigh" or shieling was a summer pasture, where families would live in shieling huts tending their cattle. There are five stones forming the row and another outlier to the north – perhaps one day more stones will emerge from the peat. None of the remaining stones is more than 1m (3ft 3in) high. At NB 2465 3034, 1.7km (just over 1 mile) east of Callanish 4, are the remains of **Callanish 6** stone circle.

CALLANISH 8 Alt Names: Bernera Bridge, Cleitir

Standing Stones | Nearest Village: **Earshader**
Map: **NB 1642 3424** | Sheets: **E459 L13** | Lat: **58.205409N** | Long: **6.829318W**

"The position of the stones at the narrowest point between the islands of Bernera and Lewis is of interest and possibly significant." Sandy Gerrard

Some 5km (3 miles) west of the main Callanish site, overlooking the bridge that links Lewis to the little island of Bernera, is this very unusual site, unique in Britain. A semi-circle of four standing stones (the tallest is 2.7m/9ft) and a

prostrate pillar are sited on a steep slope above a cliff that rises 12.5m (40ft) from the water. There's no suggestion that this was once a whole circle, half of which has fallen – this is how it was built.

OLCOTE Alt Name: **Breasclete Cairn**

Kerbed Cairn | Nearest Village: **Breasclete**
Map: **NB 2179 3473** | Sheets: **E459 L8** | Lat: **58.21324N** | Long: **6.73874W**

This kerbed cairn, only half of which remains, was discovered during improvements to the road through Breasclete. Excavation demonstrated this was a three-phase site, with what have been suggested as ritualistic ard markings found on the original ground surface. A large number of post-holes were also found, probably part of phase two – the construction of the cairn. This is unusual in having two kerbs, the outer one of stones laid flat rather than on end. A cremation urn was found in the central cist, and a path of slabs led to this from the northeast, flanked by posts. The cairn was then covered with some 400 quartz flakes. A poor-quality raw material, quartz is full of symbolism and perhaps linked to funerary rituals. Further excavation found more post-holes, suggesting successive structures. The cairn's original entrance appeared to be aligned on the avenue at Callanish (see page 338). This entrance was later blocked and a second entrance built.

Photo © Sandy Gerrard

Nearby | At NB 2103 3549, 1km (0.6 miles) WNW of Olcote, are the remains of the **Cnoc a Phrinossa** chambered cairn, with great views over the loch. Permission is needed from the landowner to visit.

MAP

CLACH AN TURSA Alt Names: **Stone of Sadness, Carloway Row**

Stone Row | Nearest Village: **Carloway**
Map: **NB 2041 4295** | Sheets: **E459 L8** | Lat: **58.28591N** | Long: **6.77214W**

The stone that still stands is 2.4m (8ft) tall and 1m (3ft 3in) across its widest face. Two others lie prostrate and broken – one would have been 4.4m (14ft 8in) and the other 5.2m (17ft) long. On private land – ask permission for a closer view.

CLACH AN TRUISHAL

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Ballantrushal**

Map: **NB 3756 5377** | Sheets: **E460 L8** | Lat: **58.3934N** | Long: **6.4929W**

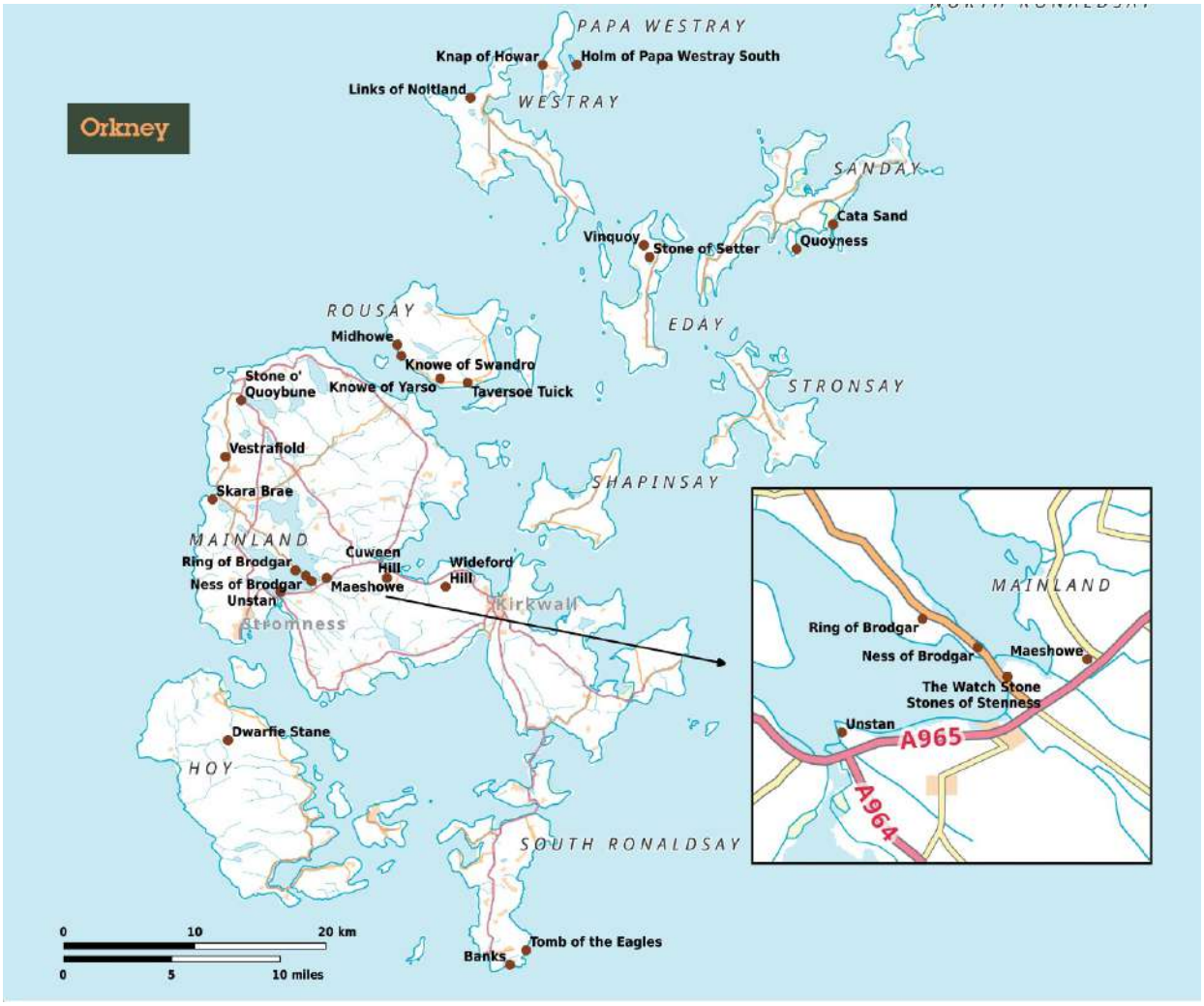
Said to be Scotland's tallest standing stone, this impressive beast reaches 6m (20ft) in height, and is about 1.8m (6ft) wide, with an estimated 2m (6½ft) still underground. It's said the stone was once surrounded by a circle, the stones of which were broken up and used as lintels and in field walls, the last one, apparently, having been taken for a lintel in around 1914. There are plenty of suspiciously suitable stones in the walls nearby, and in 2006 three stone sockets were found, one of which was preceded by a timber post. It appears that a more or less horizontal platform for the circle was created by modifying the natural ground surface.

STEINACLEIT

Possible Chambered Tomb | Nearest Village: **Shader**

Map: **NB 3963 5408** | Sheets: **E460 L8** | Lat: **58.39663N** | Long: **6.45837W**

There are great views of moorland and lochs from this enigmatic site, which has in the past been variously identified as a chambered cairn, or, alternatively, as some kind of building. The sign at the site suggests that it is probably best interpreted as a prehistoric settlement with a surrounding stock enclosure.


Orkney
PAPA WESTRAY
Knap of Howar
Holm of Papa Westray South
Links of Noltland
WESTRAY
SANDAY
Cata Sand
Quoyness
Vinquoy
Stone of Setter
ROUSAY
EDAY
Midhowe
Knowe of Swandro
Stone o' Quoybune
Knowe of Yarso
Taversoe Tuick
STRONSAY
Vestrafiold
SHAPINSAY
Skara Brae
MAINLAND
Cuween Hill
Wideford Hill
Ring of Brodgar
Ness of Brodgar
Maeshowe
Unstan
Kirkwall
Stromness
Dwarfie Stane
HOY
SOUTH RONALDSAY
Tomb of the Eagles
Banks
0 10 20 km
0 5 10 miles
MAINLAND
Ring of Brodgar
Ness of Brodgar
Maeshowe
The Watch Stone
Stones of Stenness
Unstan
A965
A964

Northern Isles

RING OF BRODGAR

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Finstown**
Map: **HY 2945 1335** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **59.0014N** | Long: **3.22976W**

A narrow strip of land separates the Loch of Stenness from the Loch of Harray. This is the Ness of Brodgar, location of some of the most spectacular prehistoric sites in Britain, wide open to both water and sky. There are stone circles at both ends; the northerly one is the Ring of Brodgar, a Class II henge with a well-preserved ditch hewn out of the solid bedrock by its prehistoric builders. This ditch, 10m (33ft) wide and 0.9–1.8m (3–6ft) deep, was 3m (10ft) deep originally. Within the henge is a stone circle, 103.5m (340ft) in diameter, the stones set just within the scarp of the ditch. There's no bank – and no evidence there ever was one. Just 14 stones remained standing at the Ring of Brodgar in the mid-19th century, but 13 have since been re-erected, and the sockets of another 13 have been found – it's thought there were probably about 60 stones when the circle was built. Some of the remaining stones are stumps, but the unbroken ones are impressive, between 2m and 4.5m (6½ft and 14ft 9in) in height. In the 12th century AD a man named Bjorn carved his name on one of the northern stones using twig runes.

Photo © Shannon O'Grady

STONES OF STENNESS

Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Finstown**
Map: **HY 3067 1252** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **58.99415N** | Long: **3.20827W**

Four uprights, rising to 6m (20ft) high, remain of a 30m (98ft) circle of 11 or 12 stones, standing on a mound once surrounded by a now-destroyed henge bank and rock-cut ditch 45m (148ft) in diameter, 7m (23ft) wide and 2m (6½ft) deep. Excavation revealed a central setting of stones, with cremated bone, charcoal and grooved ware pottery suggesting, along with radiocarbon-dating, a date of 3000BC. A paved path leads from the entrance to the central hearth, which was once misinterpreted as an altar; a dolmen was constructed over it in 1906, but removed in the 1970s. Today there is a central stone slab with two small upright stones, referred to by some as a cove, the gap between them lining up with Maeshowe (see page 348). There are a number of standing stones nearby; one of these, the Odin Stone, was destroyed in 1814. Prior to that, oaths were taken, love plighted and bargains sealed by grasping hands through a hole in the stone.

Photo © John Braid

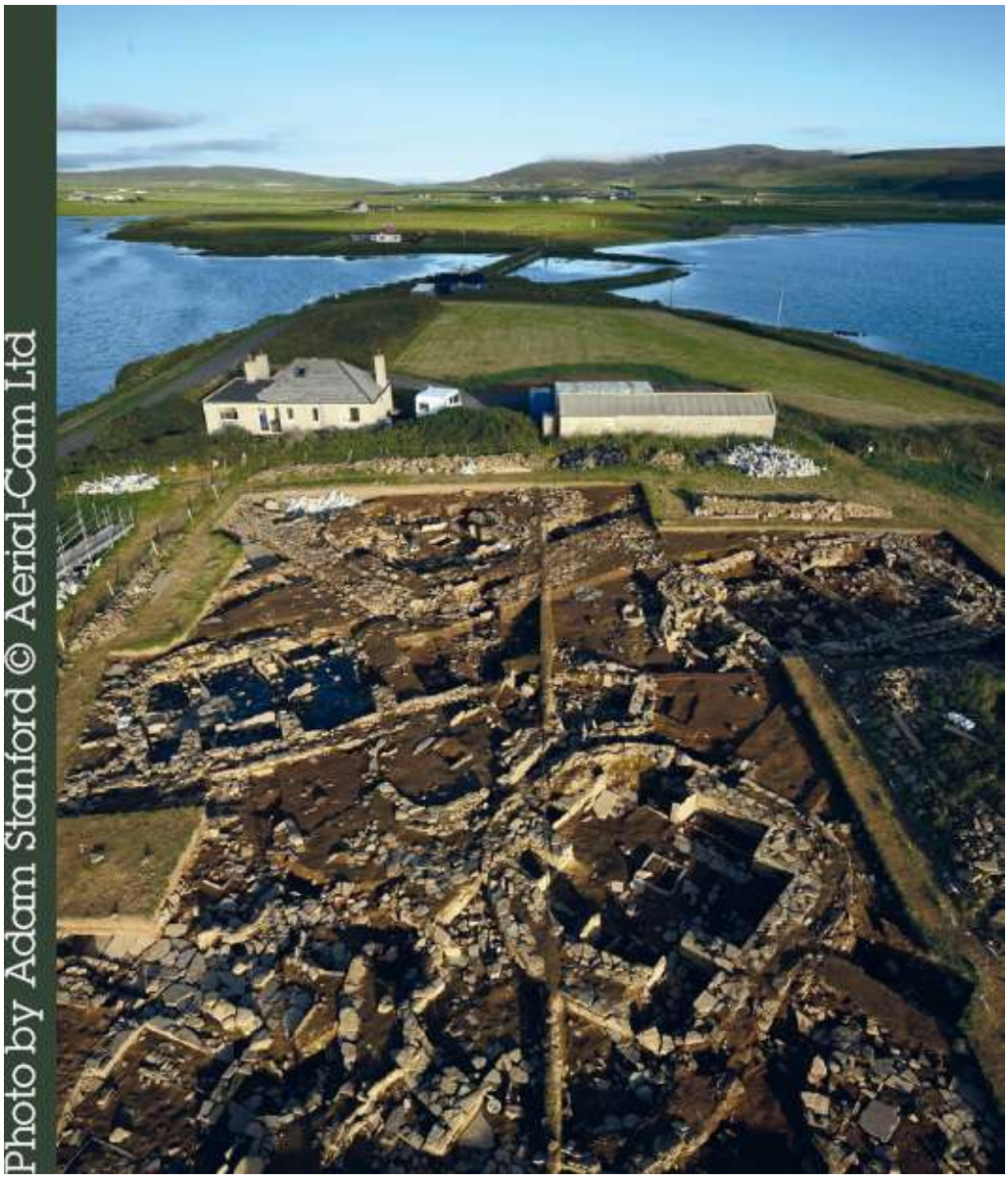
Nearby | At HY 3076 1270, just 200m (656ft) northeast of the Stones of Stenness, **Barnhouse** is a settlement of a similar age to Skara Brae (see page 349). Structure 8 appears to have been a ceremonial area, with access through what seems to be a symbolic fireplace. It's believed the buildings were deliberately demolished – what you see now is partly reconstructed on top of the original walls.

NESS OF BRODGAR

Neolithic Settlement | Nearest Village: **Finstown**
Map: **HY 3024 1294** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **58.99786N** | Long: **3.21584W**

Here on the narrow strip of land between the Ring of Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness is where a large notched stone, originally thought to be from a cist, was ploughed up in 2003. This led to the excavations of a large structure, very similar to one at Barnhouse (see page 345). And that was just the beginning. Most recently, archaeologists have found a structure unlike any other at the Ness of Brodgar. "The sheer size and scale of the stones unearthed are unprecedented on this site," said site director Nick Card. "The way the stones are built into the

construction is also unique to the Ness. This all suggests that they may have been reused and taken from elsewhere." The dig here is ongoing every July–August but it's covered up out of season, so there's not much to see when the archaeologists aren't working.



THE WATCH STONE

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Finstown**

Map: **HY 3055 1264** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **58.9952N** | Long: **3.2104W**

Standing 170m (558ft) NNW of the Stones of Stenness, this spectacular standing stone is considered to be associated with the circle. It's 5.6m (18ft 4in) high and 1.5m (5ft) wide. The stump of a second stone, now removed, was found nearby when the road was built. Together, both stones appear to be sentinels marking the approach to the causeway that links the Stones of Stenness site and the Ring of Brodgar as well as the Ness of Brodgar, which is located between them.

UNSTAN Alt Name: **Knowe of Onston**

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Town: **Stromness**

Map: **HY 2829 1172** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **58.98657N** | Long: **3.24942W**

It's well worth the effort of crawling through a very narrow 8m (26ft) entrance passage to the 16 × 6m (52 × 20ft) wide chamber, which is surprisingly bright (there are lights in the concrete roof dome) and spacious, with five stalls on each side. Excavation found flint tools along with crouched burials (typically of later date than Neolithic, so possibly the last to be interred). So many pot sherds were found that the tomb has given its name to this particular type of pottery, Unstan ware, which has a grooved pattern below the rim and a round bottom.

Excavations at the Ness of Brodgar

Andy Burnham, founder and Editor of the Megalithic Portal

The 2017 season was a very successful one at the Ness of Brodgar. Over the eight-week excavation, around 21,500 people visited the site, where an international team were hard at work. The Ness lived up to its reputation of throwing up lots of new questions, but also some magnificent finds, including two items that suggest contact between Orkney and the Stonehenge area. The first was a fragment of pot with decoration reminiscent of pottery from Durrington Walls. The other was a tiny "incense cup" – there are only four other examples of this kind of pot in the UK, all from the Stonehenge area. Usually highly decorated and mostly found in early Bronze Age contexts – often associated with burials – it has been suggested that they were used to carry embers to a funeral pyre or for burning incense during burial ceremonies.

The excavation of a huge midden mound continued during 2017. At first it was thought this was nothing more than a monumental pile of rubbish — conspicuous Stone Age consumption. In 2014, however, the stump of a standing stone turned up at the foot of the mound, and in 2015, sections of walling and uprights were found, followed the next year by massive stone slabs in the remains of a puzzling structure. These structural remnants seemed to represent a chambered cairn, similar to the one excavated at Bookan, at the other end of the Ness, in 2002. As the weeks passed, the sheer scale of the building – known as Structure 27 – became clearer. The building was enormous and the stone slabs so big it was suggested they were re-purposed standing stones. These massive megaliths were used to support uprights that clad the structure's interior wall face. Given its position, Structure 27 is likely to predate many of the other buildings on the Ness. The work in summer 2018 should hopefully have given a better idea of the layout of this building.

Meanwhile, another fragment of pottery added to the evidence that the Neolithic midden was remodelled in the Iron Age, thousands of years after the site was abandoned. Not only was a ditch cut into the mound, but a revetment wall, on the upslope side, was enhanced by a large bank, held at the rear by another revetment wall. "If these structures ran right round the crest of the mound … the visual effect would have been striking in the

extreme," said site director Nick Card, of the University of the Highlands and Islands Archaeology Institute.

Over 14 years since the discovery of the Ness complex, the site continues to produce extraordinary artefacts. Nick says, "2017 saw more artwork, stunning stone tools and a beautiful example of an early Bronze Age barbed-and-tanged flint arrowhead, recovered from the exterior of Structure 10." This is the so-called "cathedral" that overlaid the animal bone thought to be a decommissioning feast. Such finds, together with the dating evidence, are key to the idea that the start of the Bronze Age heralded the demise of the Ness, and also confirm that Bronze Age influences made it this far north.

Support the excavations by making a donation or buying a copy of the excellent guidebook at: www.nessofbrodgar.co.uk

MAESHOWE

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Finstown**
Map: **HY 3182 1277** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **58.99658N** | Long: **3.18834W**

Probably the most famous Neolithic chambered cairn or passage grave in the UK, and the largest tomb in Orkney, Maeshowe dates from around 2800BC. Although the corbelled roof was shattered in 1861 by overenthusiastic archaeologists, luckily they didn't do too much structural damage. The design and construction of the tomb is stunning, with beautifully underpinned and dressed slabs giving a smooth appearance, even where they oversail one another as they soar toward the roof. The tomb was built around the non-structural standing stones in the corners of the main chamber. It is thought that the stones that line the entrance passage were also originally standing stones.

The entrance passage, around 10m (33ft) long, leads to the chamber, which is 4.7m (15ft) across and 4.5m (14½ft) high, with the original height possibly as much as 6m (20ft). There are three side cells, and each corner has a buttress to help support the weight of the roof. Just inside the doorway is a triangular niche that holds a huge boulder; this would have been pulled with ropes to close the entrance. As well as the size and magnificent construction, Maeshowe is also famous for its orientation toward winter solstice sunset, when the sun shines down the length of the passage and illuminates the chamber (webcams are

usually installed around the time of the winter solstice so you can view this online). It's been speculated that, after thousands of years of disuse, a Viking leader might have been buried here in the 9th or 10th century AD, but there is no evidence for this. The idea came from the radiocarbon-dating of peat used to heighten the bank around the ditch to the 9th century, but this only provides a date for the source of the peat and not the works to the bank. What we do know is that the tomb was broken into by the Norse, who left the largest collection of runic graffiti outside of Scandinavia.

Visits are by guided tour only (booking advised). Parking is at the visitor centre at Stenness, with a bus taking visitors to the site.

Nearby | The **Barnhouse Stone** stands at HY 3127 1217, visible from the main Kirkwall to Stromness road. It's about 3.2m (10½ft) tall and broadens out from the bottom, reaching 1.9m (6ft) wide. It is covered in lichen and appears to be perfectly aligned to the entrance of Maeshowe, 700m (under ½ mile) to the northeast.

Photo © John Braid

MAP

CUWEEN HILL Alt Name: **Tomb of the Beagles**
Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Finstown**
Map: **HY 3642 1277** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **58.99729N** | Long: **3.1083W**

Set on a hillside overlooking the Bay of Firth, the chambered cairn at Cuween Hill is still covered by an earthen mound. Attempts to gain access in the 19th century disturbed the corbelled roof, which is now covered by flat stones. However, the corbelling inside is still in good condition. The 5.5m (18ft) entrance passage is very low – it's a long crawl to reach the main chamber. Excavations in 1901 found the remains of at least eight people, along with 24 dog skulls, perhaps representing a totem like the eagles at Isbister (see page 350).

WIDEFORD HILL

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Hatston**
Map: **HY 4090 1211** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **58.992N** | Long: **3.03017W**

A Maeshowe-type chambered cairn, built into the side of Wideford Hill. From the road to Kirkwall it looks like the whole hill is a huge cairn, perhaps representing a deliberate effect by the builders to dominate the local countryside. Entry is via a trapdoor in the roof, with a ladder into the central chamber. There are three side chambers and the original 5m (16ft) long entrance passage, no longer in use. Inside there are rare examples of Neolithic scratch art – a torch is essential.

SKARA BRAE

Neolithic Settlement | Nearest Village: **Sandwick**
Map: **HY 2312 1874** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **59.04874N** | Long: **3.34171W**

Orkney certainly does have a multitude of internationally famous sites – and this might be the most famous of all. Skara Brae is a large, well-preserved stone-built Neolithic village, occupied from roughly 3100–2500BC, and just as remarkable as everyone says it is. It was hidden beneath the sand and soil for hundreds of years, until a storm in 1850 partially unearthed it, and it was fully excavated by Gordon Childe between 1928 and 1930. The 10 houses were sunk into the ground and surrounded by their own rubbish, in the form of middens, which

acted as insulation. The houses feature a large, square room with a hearth for heating and cooking, ingenious drainage, and the famous stone-built furniture, including beds, cupboards, seats, storage boxes, as well as the “dressers”. It is not clear what the use of these so-called dressers actually was; built to the same design and placed in the same position in certain structures directly opposite the entrance, it is now thought that they were more than just furniture and perhaps functioned as altars.

Photo © ABB Photo

The site was abandoned after about 600 years, although the reason for this change is still uncertain. The weather did get worse around this time, so this may have prompted the abandonment, or it may have been the result of societal changes, from tight-knit to more dispersed groups.

Nearby | There are a number of sites in Sandwick that are traditionally said to have been the sources for the huge stones of Stenness, Maeshowe and Brodgar. **Vestrafiold**, a hill north of the Bay o’ Skaill, is the best known. Some quarried stones that never made it off site can still be seen here and recent work has confirmed that megaliths were indeed quarried there. The rock splits easily, making it very appealing to anyone sourcing material for an impressive monument. It’s at HY 2410 2200, about 3.4km (just over 2 miles) NNE of Skara Brae.

STANE O' QUOYBUNE Alt Name: **Wheebin Stone**

Standing Stone | Nearest Village: **Birsay**
Map Ref: **HY 2531 2629** | Sheets: **E463 L6** | Lat: **59.11687N** | Long: **3.30622W**

A fine and impressive stone, almost 3.8m (12ft) high and 1.5m (5ft) wide, on private land but very near the gate, so you can easily see it from the road. This is another of Orkney's standing stones around which a legend regarding a petrified giant has developed. Like the Yetnasteen on the island of Rousay, the Stane o' Quoybune is said to travel to the Boardhouse loch each New Year's morning to drink from the cold waters. Local lore dictates that anyone seeing the stone on its annual trek will not live to see another Hogmanay, so it was not surprising that it was considered unsafe to remain outdoors after midnight and watch for its movements!

TOMB OF THE EAGLES Alt Name: **Isbister**

Chambered Cairn | Island: **South Ronaldsay**
Map: **ND 4704 8449** | Sheets: **E461 L7** | Lat: **58.7448N** | Long: **2.91675W**

Discovered in 1958 by the late Ronald Simison, the farmer on whose land it stands, the Tomb of the Eagles on South Ronaldsay is a remarkable site. High on the cliffs, with spectacular views of the sea, it's famous for the bones and talons of sea eagles that were found here, which gave it its nickname, and which may represent a tribal/family identity or totem. It's an unusual combination of a Maeshowe type cairn with side cells, and an Orkney-Cromarty type stalled cairn which, although it's been quite badly robbed, is still up to 3m (10ft) high in places. The original roof was removed in antiquity, when the chamber was filled with earth and stones – it now has a concrete roof with skylights. Entry is via the original 3m (10ft) passage – you can either crawl in or use the rather fun little trolley. The tomb was disturbed to the northern and northeastern sides, but the rest was entirely intact, with lots of bones – human, bird and fish. The western side cells mainly held skulls, and recent work on these has found that 16 of the 85 discovered had suffered significant trauma. At least 340 individuals were identified, although some are represented by only a few bones, suggesting

excarnation may have taken place at another location before the bones were put in the tomb. There were also many sherds of Unstan ware pottery. Radiocarbon dates suggest the tomb was in use for about 800 years from *c*. 3000BC. There's an interpretation centre in the farmhouse, with various finds from the tomb and an excellent virtual tour.

Nearby | At ND 4646 8411, just 400m (1,312ft) from the Tomb of the Eagles, is the **Isbister burnt mound** (also known as Liddel), surrounding a Bronze Age structure. Although reduced by quarrying (most Orcadian burnt mounds have been lost in this way), it's still almost 2m (6½ft) tall in places, and consists mostly of burnt stones, ash and carbon, added in hundreds of small deposits, basically thrown away after use. (The stones were put in the fire and then added to the water in the trough to heat it.) It seems unlikely that the building ever had a roof, because of the position of the hearth and the size of the trough (1.6 × 1m/5ft 2in × 3ft 3in and 0.6m/2ft deep) – the amount of steam generated would have made it quite unpleasant to work in if it had been an enclosed space.

BANKS Alt Name: Tomb of the Otters

Chambered Cairn | Island: **South Ronaldsay**
Map: **ND 4580 8339** | Sheets: **E461 L7** | Lat: **58.73477N** | Long: **2.93791W**

Hamish Mowatt was landscaping his garden in 2010 when he broke through into an underground chamber. It all got a bit exciting when a camera poked into the hole revealed a human skull … This newly discovered chambered tomb is partly subterranean, with a central chamber and five side cells. Numerous burial deposits and collections of disarticulated bones were found, from at least 15 people, in the one cell that has so far been excavated. Remarkably, DNA testing has revealed that two adults from the tomb had the Hepatitis B virus, which may have caused their deaths.

MAP

DWARFIE STANE

Rock-cut Tomb | Island: **Hoy**
Map: **HY 2430 0043** | Sheets: **E462 L7** | Lat: **58.88452N** | Long: **3.31496W**

A unique monument, the Dwarfie Stane on Hoy is not only the only chambered tomb on Hoy, but the only rock-cut (presumably, although this has been disputed) Neolithic tomb in Britain and Ireland. It comprises two cells or chambers cut from a single block of sandstone. The thought that this was done without metal tools is pretty mind-blowing. The squarish stone nearby once blocked the entrance. The Dwarfie Stane has been a popular attraction for visitors to the archipelago for centuries and had a role in Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Pirate* (1822). There's plenty of 18th-and 19th-century graffiti, including some by Major William Mounsey, a former British spy in Afghanistan and Persia (present-day Iran); his name with the date 1850 appears on the south face, above a line of Persian calligraphy which reads "I have sat two nights and so learnt patience" – this apparently refers to his experience of the local midges when he camped here.

MIDHOWE

Chambered Cairn | Island: **Rousay**
Map: **HY 3722 3051** | Sheets: **E464 L5** | Lat: **59.15669N** | Long: **3.09947W**

Built *c*. 3500BC the huge Midhowe chambered cairn on Rousay is Orkney's largest cairn – over 22m (75ft) long. Housed in a protective shed, it is divided by pairs of upright slabs into 12 compartments, several of which contained stone benches. The remains of 25 people were found in the compartments, and Unstan ware pottery was also recovered.

KNOWE OF SWANDRO

Chambered Cairn | Island: **Rousay**
Map: **HY 3753 2966** | Sheets: **E464 L6** | Lat: **59.1491N** | Long: **3.0938W**

At the Knowe of Swandro on Rousay there are Viking, Pictish and Iron Age remains, as well as a recently discovered Neolithic chambered cairn that was thought for many years to be the remains of a broch. Much of the site is under the storm beach and every year there's a risk it will be washed away during the winter. Archaeologists are racing against time to investigate the site.

TAVERSOE TUICK

Chambered Cairn | Island: **Rousay**
Map: **HY 4257 2761** | Sheets: **E464 L5** | Lat: **59.13141N** | Long: **3.00517W**

Only two two-storey stalled cairns are known and this is one of them (the other is the less well-preserved Huntersquoy on Eday). The subterranean lower chamber, reached via a 5.8m (19ft) passage, is about 3.7m (12ft) long by 1.5m (5ft) wide and high, and divided into four cells by upright slabs. The upper chamber, covered with a domed roof after excavation in 1937, is divided into two and reached by a 3.4m (11ft) passage. As it's built on a hill, both passages are at ground level. The bones of at least three individuals were found on stone shelves in the upper chamber, and there were three piles of cremated bones in the passage. The lower chamber held further cremated bones, as well as Unstan pottery sherds, a mace head and 35 grey shale disc beads. Both passages had been blocked.

Photo © Drew Parsons

Nearby | At HY 4048 2795, just over 2km (1¼ miles) west of Taversoe Tuick, **Knowe of Yarso** is another Neolithic stalled cairn, where the bones of at least 29 individuals were found – 17 represented only by their skulls – neatly arranged in groups. Scorch marks on the bones and the upper stonework indicate fires were lit within the chamber. The tomb has a modern concrete roof and the chamber is divided into stalls or cells by vertical stone slabs.

LINKS OF NOLTLAND

Neolithic and Bronze Age Settlement | Island: **Westray**
Map: **HY 4280 4930** | Sheet: **E464 L5** | Lat: **59.32619N** | Long: **3.00688W**

This area of sand dunes on the northwest coast of Westray was first recorded in the 19th century but not excavated until the late 1970s. Further investigation is ongoing despite the challenges posed by erosion. Around 30 buildings have been found so far, of both Neolithic and Bronze Age date, including, in 2015, what has been described as the best example of a Bronze Age ritual building discovered in Orkney thus far. In 2009 the site made international headlines with the discovery of the Westray Wife, a *c*. 5,000-year-old sandstone figurine that is

one of the oldest representations of a human ever found in Scotland – with what is believed to be Britain's earliest depiction of a human face. The site is open all year round but most of the upstanding structures are covered over for protection outside of the May–September dig season.

Nearby | **Westray Heritage Centre** in Pierowall is where you can see the spiral-and lozenge-carved stone found in the quarry here, known as the Westray Stone. The Westray Wife also lives here, although check she's not being exhibited elsewhere before making a special trip to see her.

KNAP OF HOWAR

Neolithic Settlement | Island: **Papa Westray**
Map: **HY 4830 5180** | Sheets: **E464 L5** | Lat: **59.34934N** | Long: **2.91085W**

This Neolithic farmstead on Papa Westray is at least 1,000 years older than Skara Brae. Knap of Howar means "mound of mounds" and the site was covered by 4m (13ft) of wind-blown sand until it was first excavated in the early 1930s. There are two stone structures here linked by a passage, one a dwelling, the other a barn/workshop. Further excavation in the 1970s produced Unstan ware sherds and radiocarbon dates of 3600–3100BC – at that time, it wasn't on the shore but much further inland, sheltered by a series of dunes. In places the walls retain their full height, with lintels still in place over the doorways, and the house would have had two rooms, divided by stone slabs and wooden posts. Stone shelves and cupboards are built into the walls of one of the rooms of the workshop. The people who lived here bred sheep and cattle, fished, and grew wheat and barley. The houses here are thought to have been part of a larger settlement that awaits further investigation.

HOLM OF PAPA WESTRAY SOUTH

Chambered Cairn | Island: **Holm of Papa (via Papa Westray)**
Map: **HY 5091 5183** | Sheets: **E464 L5** | Lat: **59.34992N** | Long: **2.86496W**

Probably a promontory in the Neolithic, Holm of Papa is a little island off Papa Westray. This large and impressive tomb is a Maeshowe type, but the cairn is long rather than round as the chamber is huge – 20.5m (67ft) long. There are 12 side cells, including two doubles, all still intact and with low, lintelled entrances.

The roof is modern, and you enter through a roof hatch and down a ladder, instead of crawling through the entrance passage. The tomb contains a number of carved stones; on the lintel over the entrance of the southeast cell are pecked dots and arcs, some making "eyebrow" motifs similar to those found in some Irish chambered tombs. Opposite are circular and zigzag shapes, while south of the entrance, on the southeast wall of the central chamber, there is a double ring and inverted V. Access is by private hire boat, from the Old Pier Papa Westray when sea conditions allow.

Nearby | At HY 5044 5228, 649m (under ½ mile) WNW, is **Holm of Papa Westray North** chambered cairn. The tomb's main features are still visible even though it has been partly covered over.

STONE OF SETTER

Standing Stone | Island: **Eday**
Map: **HY 5645 3718** | Sheet: **E464/465 L5** | Lat: **59.21899N** | Long: **2.7646W**

On Eday, this is Orkney's tallest solitary standing stone, 4.5m (15ft) high and up to 2.2m (7ft) wide, furry with lichen and riven by weathering. It's very irregular and distinctive in shape. There are three probable small cairns in the vicinity.

Nearby | On the south coast of Eday at Green, the discovery of an unfinished mace head led to a multi-year excavation that identified a Neolithic building with a probable hearth and other internal stonework. More than 100 pottery sherds and 80 Skaill knives – a type of stone tool first found at Skara Brae (see page 349) – were also found. The dig has finished and there is nothing to see on site.

VINQUOY

Chambered Cairn | Island: **Eday**
Map: **HY 5601 3812** | Sheets: **E464/465 L5** | Lat: **59.22711N** | Long: **2.77249W**

There are other chambered cairns on Eday, but this is the only one you can get in (there's a gate to stop the sheep joining you). A restored Maeshowe-type tomb, built from the local red sandstone, it was excavated in 1857 and is about 18m (59ft) in diameter and 2.5m (8ft) tall. The 5m (16ft) entrance passage leads to a

polygonal central chamber with four small cells leading off from it. Absolutely fantastic views across much of the archipelago.

CATA SAND Alt Name: **Tresness**

Bronze Age Settlement | Island: **Sanday**
Map: **HY 7044 3967** | Sheets: **E465 L5** | Lat: **59.24256N** | Long: **2.5199W**

Storms in December 2015 revealed a number of potential buildings in the intertidal zone at Tresness on Cata Sand. The site was excavated in 2016–17 (see opposite), revealing an early Neolithic house, the first classic house of this date to be found on Sanday, contemporary with the nearby chambered cairn (HY 7109 3747). Despite the risk from erosion (parts of the site are underwater twice a day), preservation is excellent, as the sandy soil does not destroy bone.

An Early Neolithic House at Cata Sand

Vicki Cummings, Reader in Archaeology at the University of Central Lancashire

Walking to the chambered tomb at Tresness on Sanday in 2015, we came across a series of architectural remains and stone tools on the beach at Cata Sand. As the tools were mainly late Neolithic or early Bronze Age in date, we at first thought we were dealing with occupation remains of the same period, spread widely across the area. However, a geophysical survey showed that occupation remains were restricted to one small area, known as the Grithies Dune. In 2017 we opened a trench over the geophysical anomaly and revealed the remains of an early Neolithic house, defined to the north by a thick wall. Within the house were floor occupation deposits. We also found the remains of at least three hearths, which seem to represent multiple reoccupations of the house, or perhaps the remodelling of the house over time. The northern extent of the house was covered by a thick deposit of midden that may be late Neolithic or even later in date.

Perhaps more surprising was the discovery of two large linear pits cut into the sand. These contained the articulated remains of a number of whales. The eastern pit was excavated and up to 12 whale skeletons were found, although no skulls were recovered. It seems likely that the whales were caught for their blubber during the 19th century: an account of 1875 records that there were multiple decomposing whale carcasses close to Tresness, the smell of which affected the area for miles around. They could, therefore, have been buried to get rid of the bodies and the smell. They were a very peculiar addition to the excavation of a Neolithic structure!

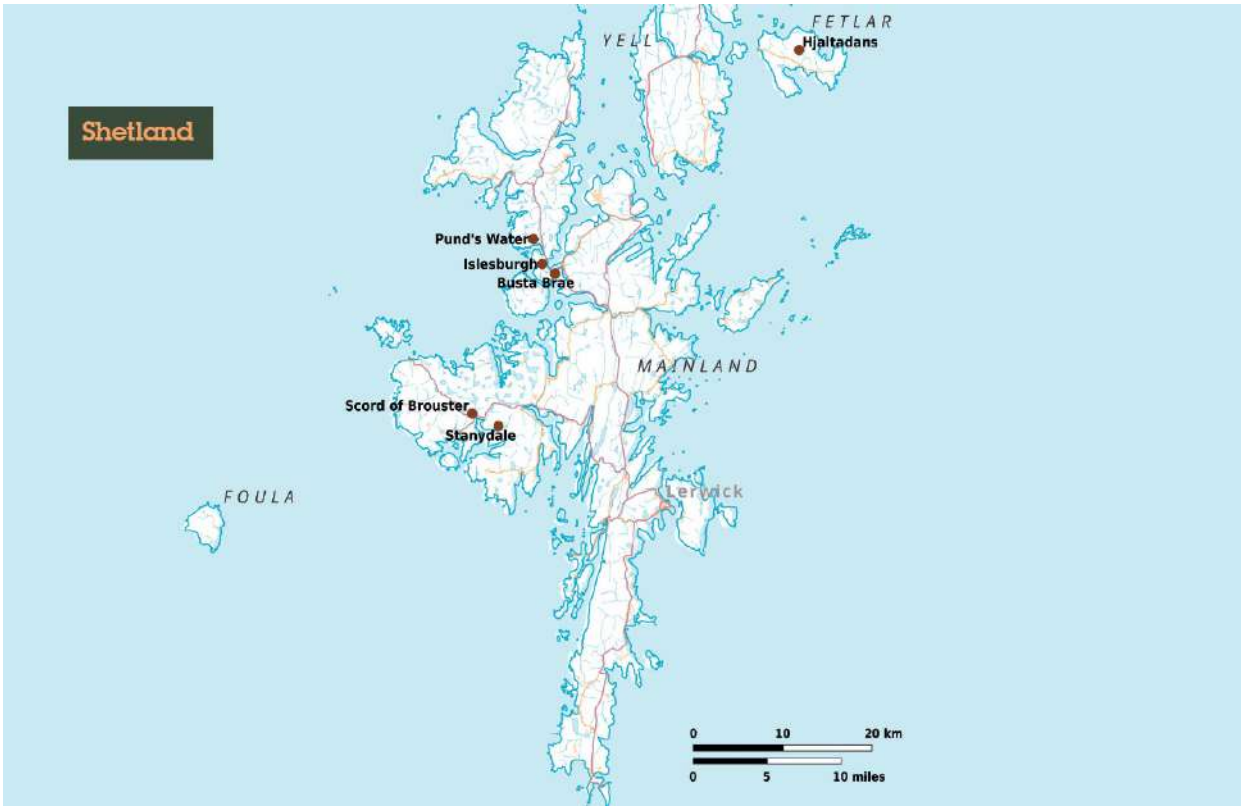
QUOYNESS

Chambered Cairn | Island: **Sanday**
Map: **HY 6766 3779** | Sheets: **E465 L5** | Lat: **59.22547N** | Long: **2.56834W**

The cairn's low passage leads to a central, corbelled chamber, 4 × 2m (13 × 6½ft) and 4m (13ft) high, with six side cells, all with corbelled roofs. Excavations in 1867 revealed skulls and bones from about 15 individuals, placed in the main chamber, side cells and passage. After re-excavation in 1951–2, the cairn was rebuilt to show its stages of construction, rather than its final form.

Photo © Drew Parsons

Nearby | At HY 6764 3753, 260m (853ft) south, is the part-eroded **Augmund Howe** cairn. Surrounding the cairn on its landward side are some hard-to-spot barrows; a further 26 barrows, the **Els Ness** megalithic cemetery, lie 340m (1,115ft) SSW of Quoyness, in the southern part of the peninsula.


Shetland
YELL
FETLAR
Hjaltadans
Pund's Water
Islesburgh
Busta Brae
MAINLAND
Scord of Brouster
Stanydale
FOULA
Lerwick
0
10
20 km
0
5
10 miles

Shetland

STANYDALE

Possibly Ritual Structure and Stone Circle | Nearest Village: **Walls**
Map: **HU 2853 5024** | Sheets: **E467 L4** | Lat: **60.23547N** | Long: **1.48658W**

This unusual structure stands among Neolithic houses and field systems. It's neither a dwelling nor a tomb, although it does resemble the local heel-shaped cairns. It's horseshoe in shape, with massive, 3.7m (12ft) thick walls enclosing an area 12.2 × 6.1m (40 × 20ft). There are two large post-holes, so it presumably had a timber roof. Evidence suggests at least one of the posts was spruce – and probably arrived as driftwood from north America. Six alcoves are built into the wall, and there were a number of peripheral hearths, which are no longer visible, rather than a central one. The stumps of five or six standing stones, apparently aligned in two sets, stand 12–35m (39–115ft) from the main structure on the north, probably the remains of Bronze Age stone circles or ovals. A number of houses are nearby, all of a similar size. One, at HU 288 503, has a "porch" in front of the entrance, with an enclosure attached.

Nearby | At HU 2560 5165, 3.2km (1½ miles) WNW of Stanydale, is the **Scord of Brouster**. This Neolithic settlement is one of the most complete in Shetland, and also one of the most straightforward to grasp when you're on site, as the houses, clearance cairns and enclosures are easy to identify. Radiocarbon dates put occupation in the late third/early second millennium BC (the ring cairn near the house closest to the road is much more recent – perhaps as many as 1,500 years younger than the settlement). There are at least four houses here, with their associated fields.

Nearby | At HU 2582 5082, 850m (½ mile) SSE of the Scord of Brouster, is **Gallow Hill**, a (possible) chambered cairn, some 25m (82ft) in diameter – unusually big for Shetland. At the centre there is a probable chamber of about 2.5m (8ft) diameter. The setting is beautiful, overlooking the waters of the Voe of Browland.

Photo © Hamish Fenton

ISLESBURGH

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Brae**
Map: **HU 3345 6845** | Sheets: **E469 L4** | Lat: **60.39857N** | Long: **1.39481W**

Set on Mavis Grind, Islesburgh would have been in a prominent location on a key route for north– south travel and for the portage of boats to and from the Atlantic and the North Sea. This heel-shaped chambered cairn, with two associated enclosures, has a concave façade with a central entrance, from where a narrow passage leads to the small central chamber, now open to the sky.

Nearby | At HU 3488 6739, 1.8km (just over 1 mile) ESE of Islesburgh, in a splendid location overlooking Busta Voe, are the stones of **Busta Brae**. The one still standing is 3.2m (10½ft) and up to 1.8m (6ft) across, a very sturdy and impressive stone thought to weigh about 18 tonnes (20 tons). Local tradition states that the larger stone was thrown here by the Devil from a hill in Northmavine.

PUND'S WATER

Chambered Cairn | Nearest Village: **Brae**
Map: **HU 3265 7117** | Sheets: **E469 L4** | Lat: **60.4237N** | Long: **1.4125W**

With views across Pund's Water, this is a great example of a heel-shaped cairn, its façade measuring at least 15m (50ft), with horns and a central entrance. The passage and chamber are roofless, and the chamber walls are about 1.5m (5ft) high. Some of the roof or cairn material has collapsed into the passage and the chamber. The nearby hill (HU 3265 7117) offers a good aerial view.

HJALTADANS Alt Name: **Fairy Ring**

Stone Circle or Cairn Circle | Island: **Fetlar**
Map: **HU 6221 9241** | Sheets: **E470 L2/3** | Lat: **60.61014N** | Long: **0.86555W**

This 11.5m (37ft) stone circle or cairn circle has about 22 low stones (as well as some loose slabs) set around an earthen ring about 8m (26ft) across with a 1.5m (5ft) wide southwest entrance. In the centre are two earthfast boulders, which look like cist remains. In legend these are a fiddler and his wife, who legend holds were turned to stone along with a ring of dancing trolls (Hjaltadans means "limping dance"). The site is in a bird-nesting sanctuary so check with the Fetlar Interpretative Centre or the RSPB for the latest access information before visiting.

If you enjoyed this ebook and would like to find out more about the megalithic and other prehistoric sites of the rest of Britain and Ireland, the following regional ebooks are also available: *The Old Stones of the West of England* 9781786782397

The Old Stones of the South, Midlands & East of England 9781786782441

The Old Stones of the North of England & Isle of Man 9781786782403

The Old Stones of Wales 9781786782410

The Old Stones of Ireland 9781786782434

You can also download the complete ebook:

The Old Stones: A Field Guide to the Megalithic Sites of Britain and Ireland
ISBN: 9781786782038

Also available as a book:

The Old Stones: A Field Guide to the Megalithic Sites of Britain and Ireland
ISBN: 9781786781543